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Keto ran a curious finger over its glassy surface.

NOAH'S GRANDCHILDREN

BY JULIER C. CHEVALIER

ILLUSTRATED BY W. C. TROUT

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Noah's Grandchildren

I

How the Story Came

MAY 4 1931

IN THE yellow circle of a swinging kerosene lamp a barefooted boy sat and read. The book before him was thick and broad and bound in leather rough from years of use. Its huge covers were fitted with metal corners and a massive silver clasp that locked when they were closed.

It was a story book. The bold black type and faded pictures on its thick mellow pages told of travel and adventure, of battles won and lost, of hate and love and life and death.

The boy was born and lived on the great rolling plains of Texas. He had never seen a mountain; nor had he ever seen the sea. Because of

this, perhaps, there was one story of which he never tired; he was reading it now:

"And the water returned from off the earth. . . . And the ark rested in the seventh month upon the mountains of Ararat. . . . And Noah went forth with his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. . . . And he became a husbandman. . . . And Noah's sons and their children overspread the whole earth."

As the boy grew older he read that story, among others, again and again, but never, when he closed the book, did he feel that the whole had been told. It ended too abruptly; it was a good story that had been cut a little short.

The boy became a man and the man traveled. The man traveled far and wide; his adventures were many on land and sea, but none of them ever equaled those of which he had read as a child in the heavy old book.

After years of travel it so happened that the man stood on the mountains of Ararat. He stood on the saddle where Greater Ararat slopes upward and outward from Lesser Ararat. As he gazed up toward the icy, cloud-hidden peak whence Noah and his little family had descended he resolved to seek the end of the story; he re-

solved to find the great-grandchildren of Noah.

The story said, "And Noah planted vineyards." The man came down and sought for vineyards. Now in all the lowland about Ararat there was no vineyard nor was there any man that answered to the name of Noah's great-grandson. The man, however, did not lose hope but fared onward, southward and westward. At last he came to the Caucasus Mountains, which are among the oldest in the world. These he climbed and passed over. As he descended their sunny southern slopes he began to see all about him the houses of husbandmen, and the air was sweet with the odor of the ripening grapes.

"Surely," thought the man, "I am nearing my journey's end," and being wearied with the many miles he had come, he sat down on a stone by the roadside to rest.

Up the grassy hill, and removed a little from the road, he saw a little house. It was loosely built of rough-hewn boards which yet showed the marks of the adz. It was roofed with curly hand-split shingles and was perched high above the ground on slender stiltlike legs. As the traveler watched an aged man came from the house and approached his resting place.

The old man held in one hand a horn of wine which he offered to the traveler, saying at the same time with a low bow:

"Victory be with thee. Refresh thyself and long life to thee!"

When the traveler had emptied the drinking horn of its contents the old man took him by the arm and led him toward the near-by house. As they neared the house a woman came out and stood with lowered eyes. At the steps the old man bade the traveler be seated. The traveler seated himself upon the lower step, and the woman, taking off his dusty shoes, washed his tired feet with cool water from a ewer and dried them with a length of harsh linen. When she had done she replaced the traveler's shoes and hastened away, to return shortly with a rich morsel of goat's cheese and a bowl of warm porridge.

Upon seeing all these things, the traveler became even more certain that he was near his journey's end and turning to the old man inquired how he was called.

And the old man replied: "I am of those who are called in this land Karthli, for we are the descendants of Karthlos, the son of Togarmah, who was the great-grandson of Noah. And him

He saw a little house perched high above the ground on slender, stiltlike legs.

have we followed, for we are husbandmen and plant vineyards. Eat, now, I pray thee, and rest thee."

The traveler was overjoyed on hearing the words of his aged host, and when the old man pressed him to tarry in their midst he readily consented. Seven years the traveler lived with them. He ate with them and slept with them; he made merry with them at their weddings and wept with them at their burials. In days of peace he sat at their table and in war he fought by their side.

On warm summer days he trod the mountain paths in the wake of the grazing sheep or rested and mused in the shade of ancient castles built by long-forgotten kings. When winter came he sat in friendly circles about cheery open fires on the earthen floors of crude log kitchens and harkened to song or tale. In every crumbling stone of the deserted castle ruins he saw another picture, and in every song or tale he heard another chapter, from the old, old story.

They sang of Togarmah, the son of Gomer, whose father was Japheth, the son of Noah; they sang of Karthlos, the son of Togarmah, and they told how he became the father of their people;

and of his son Mtsketos, the Builders of Cities and Walls. The traveler heard the story and went and saw the city of Mtsketos, which is called Mtsket and still stands, a monument to the name of its builder.

He heard of Pharnavas, the splendid, who gathered all the tribes together and drove the Persians and Armenians from their borders; and he stood beneath bridges erected by the passing generals of Alexander the Great. He learned that even the armies of the Romans under Pompey and Trajan had been unable to take from the Karthli their liberty.

The priests told him of St. Nina, who, fleeing from Tiradates, the cruel King of Armenia, came to them bringing the Word of Christ out of Cappadocia in the third century after his crucifixion. And the priests showed him the chapel built on the spot where St. Nina had delivered the Word. The chapel was built to hold the cross which St. Nina wove from the vine of the grape, and it sheltered it for many years until marauding Russians stole the cross away. The priests told, also, of good St. Mesrop, who gave to them an alphabet and wrote for them the Holy Bible in their own language in the Fifth Century of our Lord.

The old men told tales of massacre and pillage; how the Tartars came under the Sons of Genghis Khan and how they were twice visited by Timur, the Lion, sometimes called Tamerlane, who came out of the land of Samarkand with fire and sword. They told of their own king, Gurg-Arslan, the Wolf-Lion, who marched to capture India, and how in his old age he returned home and built the city of Tiflis, which still stands on the warm springs from which it takes its name.

Last of all he heard of the Russians, who came and took their country with the sword and oppressed them terribly for a hundred years, and how the Russians had but lately departed to leave the Karthli again in peace.

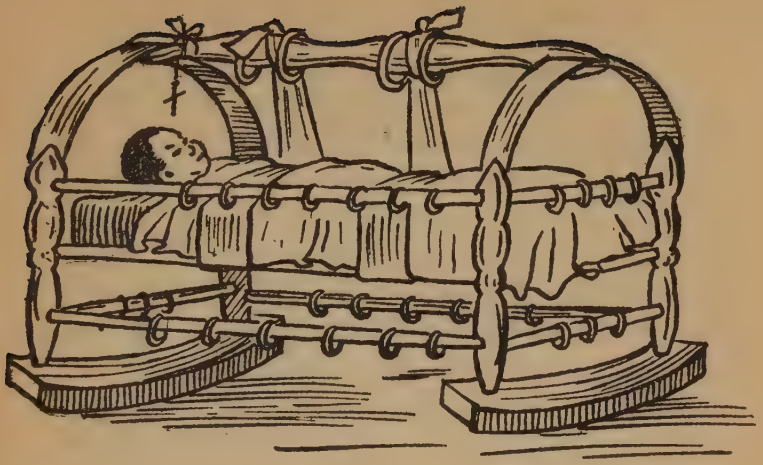
When the traveler inquired how their present king was called, the Karthli answered proudly that they had no king but that a new leader had arisen—a just and learned man of ripe years—and that he was called Noah—Noah Jordani.

And then the traveler knew for a certainty what he had long suspected—the old, old story had no end! He knew that it went on and on and on, ever changing, ever new.

Best of all the land of the Karthli, which is called Georgia, the traveler loved that part which

is called Guria. Best of all the people of Karthli he loved the Guriani or Gurians, for they are the most hospitable of all that hospitable people, and the greatest defenders of their liberty. With all the hardships of foreign invasion and cruel oppression they have never lost their deep love for their native land and their proud inheritance of liberty and wonderful tradition.

So the traveler became one with the Gurians; their children called him Uncle, and the traveler came to know them as very much like the children of his own far America. True, they call their father *mama* and their mother *deda,* but they have their games and they help their elders; they like to go on journeys to new and strange places and see new and strange things. Above all, they like to hear stories and sing songs. In the following stories which the traveler tells of Gogi and his little sister Keto you will learn wherein their work and games and manner of living differ from your own.



II

Gogi's Babyhood

GOGI was a Georgian boy from the province of Guria, which lies on the warm slopes of the Caucasus Mountains. He had been born on the feast day of good White Georgi, the patron saint of all the Caucasus, and because of this he was called Gogi, which is really a shortening of Georgi.

The priest had come, and with him the deacon. These two had baptized the child and named him Georgi. The priest had painted crosses of sweet

oil upon the squirming body of Gogi with a tiny brush of camel's hair; crosses upon the soles of his feet—that he might follow the right path; crosses upon the palms of his hands—that he might do good deeds; and crosses on his crown and forehead—that he might always think aright. The priest had snipped, too, a dark silky curl from Gogi's round little head, and after dipping him all naked into a great bowl of water, had wrapped him all dripping in a long strip of linen and placed him in the arms of *natlia-mama,* the godfather. About his neck had been hung a tiny silver cross strung on a thread of raw silk.

Natlia-deda, the godmother, and *Natlia-mama,* the godfather, had been commanded by the priest to spit thrice and blow thrice to rid them of evil. The priest spoke a short prayer and turning to the godparents said: "Take ye this servant of the Lord, Georgi, and watch over him and keep him as if he were your own; and may ye answer to the Holy Trinity! Amen!"

Vasso, the father, and Nina, the mother, who had been sent from the room during the ceremony, were allowed to return. Kissing and embracing their little son's godparents, they said: "Long life to you and may your evil be on our heads."

The godparents returned the embraces and replied: "And to you long life."

Gogi's mother, Nina, took him from the godfather's arms and placed him in his little cradle, strapping him firmly to its thin felt mattress. This cradle was Gogi's first childhood memory. The gay paint of its carved posts and the bright colored wooden beads with which it was decorated were a joy to his baby eyes. How he longed to touch them—to grasp them with his chubby baby fists and draw them even nearer. But try as he would he could not, for his arms were bound snugly to his sides by the two broad bandages that strapped him to the cradle. The bands were of strong linen and encircled his small body, cradle, felt mattress, and all. Nina tied him thus in order that he might grow straight and tall like his father, Vasso.

Whither Nina went she took little Gogi. Picking up the cradle by the round crosspieces that ran from one bowed end to the other, she carried it about from place to place—to the log kitchen down by the brook, to the milking shed, or to the mill below the house. When Gogi was hungry, Nina knelt beside his cradle and fed him, and when he cried she would sit spinning silk at his

side and croon a song while she rocked his crib on its short rockers with a toe that she slipped from her wooden sandals.

Always Gogi lay in his cradle excepting short intervals when his mother took him out to change his swaddling clothes and allow him to stretch and yawn. When he stretched Nina was delighted and, stroking his little, fat stomach, would croon lovingly: "Stretch and grow, little heart, stretch and grow." And over his yawning mouth she would make the sign of the cross so that no evil might enter while it was open.

Gogi stretched and grew, and when the feast of White Georgi came again the cradle had become already too small for his long legs. When Nina drew the bands that held him in his two little feet and his curly mop of black hair were forced tight against the two arched ends.

"The time is come," said Nina, "when he must have a *takhta.*" And Vasso, taking his hatchet, made his son a rough bed from walnut wood. It was little more than a broad, short-legged bench covered with a thick slab of soft felt. From sheep's wool Nina had rolled and beaten two squares of felt, one thick and another thin. The thicker piece she used as a mattress to soften the hard boards

of the *takhta,* and the thinner one, decorated on one side with tufts of long goat's hair, was to cover Gogi on chilly nights.

Vasso took the little cradle from its place in the corner and hung it carefully on a peg driven into a chink of the wall. He ran a loving finger over its carved legs and gave the rattling strings of gay colored wooden beads a last caress. "This has been a lucky cradle," he said to his wife. "In it I slept and my father before me, and we are tall men and shave our beards. May the Lord give that our son's son sleep in it also."

"May the Lord give," repeated Nina, and she made the sign of the cross with her fingers over Gogi as he snuggled into his strange new bed to lie on his side for the first time in his young life.

Gogi was overjoyed with this new freedom of feet and hands, and with the coming of winter he took his first few baby steps. First he learned to pull himself to his feet by holding onto the tufts of hair on his *takhta's* felt coverlet; and then he learned to walk down one side, around the end, and up the other side of his bed, stumbling and clutching with little frightened grabs at the shaggy felt.

"It is a blessing," said Nina to Vasso, as they watched his playful antics, "that our little frog walks in the winter."

Vasso, squatted on his heels a few paces from Gogi, was teasing his son to loose his grasp of the bed and dash across the narrow space of open floor to his outstretched hands. He gravely nodded without taking his gaze from Gogi's unsteady efforts to stand alone. Vasso understood what his wife meant—that little toddlers needed careful watching in the summer time when doors are wide open, because houses in Guria stand high above the ground on spidery, stiltlike legs.

One winter day the little cradle was again taken down from its peg in the wall and became the bed of Gogi's little sister, Keto. Her full name was Ekaterini, but that was much too large a name for so small a girl, Nina said, and so, to her parents and her brother, Gogi, she became Keto. Keto, too, in time outgrew the little carved crib, and Vasso made for her a *takhta* just like the one on which her brother slept.

Gogi and Keto romped together in the house, and when the weather was warm they loved to play in the woods beyond the brook that flowed below the little log kitchen at the bottom of the

yard. In the woods they gathered nuts or chased the lean, long-legged mountain pigs. Where nuts were the pigs were sure to be, for they, too, loved nuts, and when the children drove them off with loud cries and bits of stick or stone the pigs were very frightened and angry and would shake their great tusked heads and switch their long tails and squeal with terror of the missiles and disappointment at losing a fine feed of sweet filbert nuts.

One day as the children returned from such a trip to the woods their father Vasso met them at the top of the steep house steps and said, "Come and see your baby sister, my children."

"A baby sister!" shrieked Keto. "Where is she? What is her name?"

"She is in the old cradle in the big room," replied Vasso, smiling at their excitement. "And she has no name as yet, but the good priest will soon find one for her, no doubt."

As Vasso had said, the cradle stood in the big front room and over it knelt Granny Imnadze, who lived in the little house below the mill. She smiled a greeting to the children, and as they drew near she drew back the coverlet and held a finger to her toothless old mouth in warning.

On the tiny pillow of the crib lay a little round head covered with downy black hair, and a face that screwed itself up into a dozen wrinkles and dimples as the bright light struck it.

Keto would have reached out her hand to fondle the tiny head, but Granny thrust her aside with an angry whisper. "Do you think that this is a knucklebone that you can play with?" she asked. "This is another little mouth to eat the sweets that your *natlia* brings from the bazaar in the city."

"And another pair of legs to run with Keto and me in the woods," said Gogi happily. "And another pair of hands to gather nuts and stone the greedy pigs that steal them."

"Time enough for these little legs to run in the woods with you two little frogs. Begone and let her sleep," retorted the tart old granny, and Gogi and Keto ran back to the woods to chase the pigs and plan games for the newcomer.

III

New Year's Eve

THE sun was still behind the mountains when Gogi arose. Hastily slipping into his homespun blouse and baggy breeches, he pattered barefoot to the window ledge where his stiff rawhide slippers stood filled with water.

He called these slippers *tchouvaki* and he wore them when he had a great deal of walking to do.

Soaked in water as they were, they became quite soft, and when worn with thick socks of spongy wool they did not tire his feet as did his wooden sandals, with their leather thong sawing between his toes.

He emptied the water from the now softened *tchouvaki* and banged them against the side of the window to rid them of the last drops. This done, he drew them on his stockinged feet and bound them fast by wrapping their long laces several times about his ankles and legs.

Gogi was now ready for the day, and it promised to be a very busy day. The morrow would bring the New Year and there would be feasting and singing. Where there is feasting and singing, there is always a host of guests. Food and drink must be made ready for the guests, and many good things that had been put away in the autumn would reappear to-morrow to fill the great table that Vasso was even now hammering together in the middle of the wide yard. Gogi heard the thupp-thupp-thupp of the hand ax against the heads of the strong square nails that Vasso had ordered from neighbor Vanno last week.

"Vanno is a clever fellow," thought Gogi, as he clambered down the steep steps of his home to

seek the water jug. "Vanno demanded two skeins of silk thread in exchange for those nails, and all the time he well knew that they were for the table from which he would be the first to get his fill. Never mind; long life to Vanno. The table is to honor good St. Basil, who is patron of the New Year and all good things that come with it. He will accept the sacrifice and watch over the silkworms this year; the worms will prosper and the silk will be returned sevenfold."

Gogi found the water jug, or *koki,* as it is called, and grasping its damp fat sides with his knees, allowed a thin trickle of cold water to dribble from its long narrow neck into his cupped hands. As fast as his hands were filled he dashed the water into his face; he shook his head to get the water out of his ears, dried his hands on the loose skirts of his blouse and dashed around the corner of the house to see the table finished.

"Wah!" said his father, Vasso, by way of greeting, as he saw Gogi's still damp face at his busy elbow. "You have come to hold the nails for me, eh?"

Gogi would have liked to drive a nail himself, but he knew that he could never swing the heavy hatchet hard enough to force them through the

tough planks. It was fun to watch his father, however, so he took the nails and stood carefully to one side.

Thupp-thupp-thupp . . . bang-bang, came the blows of Vasso's hatchet, and one by one the long nails disappeared into the wood. Now and then a spark flew from the swishing head of the hatchet as it glanced from the head of a spike, and Gogi thought:

"Vanno, the smith's son, is not such a bad fellow after all. How the sparks flew when he was making the nails! It must be nice to be sixteen and almost a man; to make nails and swords and sharpen plows and be the champion wrestler of the whole countryside. Vanno sometimes allowed the smaller boys to pump the forge when they came with bullocks to be shod. If the boys were too small the huge bellows dragged them off their feet, and then Vanno and his father, Grigo, the smith, would laugh and shout and slap their knees and say: 'Ho, little *gogo,* little girl, back to your knitting! Home to your mother!' "Yes, Vanno was a big fellow, but when it came to throwing a bullock and lashing his feet to a pole for shoeing, even he had need of his father, Grigo."

Vasso drove home the last of the nails with a

mighty bang and, standing back to inspect his work, passed the hatchet to Gogi. This was just what Gogi had been looking forward to, and he already knew what was expected of him. He was to go for the filbert sapling from which Vasso would make the "Beard of St. Basil." Other years Vasso had chosen the tree himself, but a week or so ago he had mentioned that Gogi might go this year.

As Gogi neared the little log kitchen that stood on the brookside below the house he threw back his shoulders and walked very straight, with the shining hatchet tilted on his shoulder. He slackened his pace as he came closer, hoping that his mother, Nina, or his sister, Keto, who was helping her, might notice him.

"Gogi goes for the Beard of St. Basil," a shrill voice cried, and Gogi knew that his sister had seen him.

Nina, with head snugly bound in a black kerchief, turned from the great pot of millet porridge which she was stirring to greet her son.

"May thy troubles be on my shoulders!" said the mother. "Surely you are a young man and go to fetch the Beard of St. Basil (may his blessing be on our roof)."

"It is my year," answered Gogi, "and a great Beard it shall be, for I am well able to carry a man's beard these days."

"It is good to be strong," agreed his mother, "but one must feed strength." And knowing that the lad wished to be on his way, she gave him a steaming chunk of cornbread and a moist lump of good salty cheese as they talked.

"*Natlia-mama* (the godfather) comes to us with the New Year, and the pig to be roasted is as big as an ox, for the *natlia* is a rich man who has seen much, and we would not have any shame on our house. Therefore, when you have found a sapling for the Beard seek another upon which to roast the pig, for the one we used last year is far too small. See that it is strong and with a good bend so that it may be easily turned under the great weight of so huge a pig."

Gogi, with a word of thanks for the food and another of assent to her request, placed the bread and cheese in the peak of his *bashlik,* which had fallen from his head and hung down his back. Waving his hand in a farewell, he leaped from stone to stone across the shallow stream of the brook and started toward the forest at a fast trot.

The wood was filled with filbert trees, but Gogi

"It is good to be strong," agreed his mother. "But one must feed strength."

was not contented with the first to which he came. He followed from one to another. Each time as he found a good one and made ready to chop it down, he was sure to discover another and better one somewhere near. St. Basil's feast came but once a year, and Gogi wanted nothing but the best.

At last he found one that suited him and carefully cut it down. After trimming the twigs from the young tree, he placed it on one side and turned to seek another for a new wooden spit upon which to roast the giant pig. He lost no time in this second choice and soon set out for home, dragging the two trees behind him.

Vasso was waiting in the kitchen when Gogi returned, and together they began to prepare the Beard of St. Basil. Vasso stripped the bark from the tiny tree and closely trimmed the twigs. When he had finished this he began to heat the tree in the flames of the open fire that burned merrily in the middle of the kitchen floor. As he turned the tree the wood became hotter and hotter; steam came from it in little jets and spurts, and it seemed ready to burst into flames when Vasso withdrew it. The larger end he placed in a convenient chink of the wall and on the smaller

end he pressed with his stomach. When it was caught firmly in this manner he began to draw his sharp hatchet along the sides of it, starting at the larger end and scraping toward the smaller. With each succeeding scrape a long snow-white streamer curled up under the razorlike edge of the hatchet.

Scrape—scrape—scrape, went the big hatchet in Vasso's big knotty hands, until the little sapling was covered with hundreds of silky, snowy streamers that made it appear like a huge white beard—like the white beard of St. Basil himself, as he smiled down from his picture in the circle of shining candles at the little church in the village of Ozerget.

Vasso took a short piece of wood which he had chopped from a bough and tied it to the Beard at the top where the bare end protruded, making in this way a sort of cross. He sharpened the ends and gave the whole a twirl that made every hair of the Beard stand out like a skirt of a ballet dancer. He seemed to be satisfied with his efforts, for with a grunt of admiration he placed the Beard in the corner and drove his hatchet deep into a log of the wall where it was always kept when not in use.

With the Beard completed, Gogi suddenly remembered the cheese and bread which reposed in the peak of his *bashlik,* where he had thrown it on returning with the trees. Vasso strode across the yard and into the barn; Gogi, left alone, found his forgotten food, long cold, and seated on the log sill of the kitchen door, began to munch it hungrily.

Vasso reappeared presently, leading his shaggy pony, and mounting, trotted out of the yard and up the narrow dirt road. Gogi gazed after his father's bobbing form as long as it was in sight and thought: "He rides to meet *natlia-mama,* the godfather, and Uncle Kola, who come from the city."

A turn in the road swallowed the figure of Vasso, and Gogi turned his idle gaze to the kitchen. All about him he saw evidence of the feast; on the broad low table lay the pig, singed of his bristles in a fire of straw and scrubbed white with hot water and shreds of spongy bark. Beside the pig lay the long, crooked sapling which Gogi had brought from the woods and upon which the pig was to be roasted. A barrel of pickles stood in a cool corner of the room, farthest from the fire in its middle; the head of the barrel

was knocked in and the juicy green tomatoes, beans, and cucumbers peeped up through a thin layer of oak leaves, ready to be eaten. High on the smoky rafters hung a dozen or more of what looked very much like huge tallow dips or colorless sausages. As the boy's roving eye came to rest on these it filled with a greedy light.

"Sugar sausages," thought he, as he gazed yearningly at them. "To-morrow we shall know their flavor!"

Sugar sausages they were, indeed, and Nina, the mother, had made them last autumn at the time of grape picking. She had boiled a great pot of sweet grapejuice and corn meal and into the thick mixture she had dipped long strings of filbert nuts. Like tallow dips, each string had been dipped several times and at last hung to dry on the high rafters where Gogi now saw them. She had poured out the flour and juice that remained in the pot onto a strip of coarse, homespun silk and placed it in the warm sun to dry; when the mush had dried through and through Nina had pulled it free of the cloth and rolled it up as though it were itself a piece of cloth, and placed it in the bottom of the big walnut chest to await the feast of St. Basil or some other holiday.

It was very good to nibble—tough and rubbery and sweet.

While Gogi ate, his mother entered the kitchen and, wishing him "a good appetite," began the weary round of labor that came with each feast day. As soon as Gogi had swallowed the last crumb Nina handed to him a heavy wooden object that looked very much like a thick wooden hour-glass. She gave him, also, a big smooth pear-shaped stone and a shallow pan of nut meats mixed with a few lumps of coarse rock salt.

Gogi had never seen a meat grinder or kitchen mill; in fact, he had never heard of one, but in a few minutes he was grinding the nut meats and salt at a great rate. First he put the nuts and salt with a dried red pepper into the hollow of the wood; then he began to pound and grind them into a pulp with the pear-shaped stone. Nina would later mix the ground nuts with warm water and vinegar to make a cold sauce for the cold roast chicken and turkey. This would be *tsutsivi,* and no one ever heard of a feast without *tsutsivi.*

And so the long day passed. Task after task was finished by the busy hands of Nina and little Keto, and now and then Gogi came in for a share of the work.

The shadows lengthened and night fell. From the little kitchen by the brook came the appetizing odors of cooking food and an intermittent thudding like the muffled roll of a giant drum. The drumlike sounds came from the *katok,* upon which Nina was ironing the table spreads for the holiday table.

Nina folded the great squares of coarse linen and wrapped them snugly about a hard wooden roller not unlike a long rolling pin for pastry. Placing the roller with its layer of table spread upon the kitchen table, she would roll it, always in one direction, with a thick, heavy club. This club was just about the size and shape of a cricket bat that had been slightly bent in the middle and of which the flat side had been covered with row on row of teeth. As these teeth were drawn across the roll of linen, they made the thudding, drumlike sounds. Each square of linen was treated in this manner for several minutes, and when it was removed it was quite soft and smooth and unwrinkled.

Little Keto rocked the baby in her tiny carved crib to one side, and in the center of the kitchen floor the fire blazed merrily. Gogi sat nodding at

the day's last task—he was roasting the pig for the feast.

The pig, with his tail and ears covered with a thick coating of flour to keep them from burning, was speared on the wooden spit which Gogi had brought from the woods. Each end of the sapling spit was held in the crotch of a forked stick driven into the dirt floor of the kitchen, and as Gogi bore down on its crooked length it turned over and over. The pig sizzled and browned as it turned with the spit, and the flickering flames threw its black shadow onto the wall to somersault and spin like the giant figure of some strange goblin dancing madly to the drumming of Nina's *katok*.

IV

The Beard of St. Basil

THE embers of the open kitchen fire had died to a dull red. A last dribble of fat fell from the roasted pig and, striking the hot coals, burst with a little crackle into a sizzling yellow flame that again lighted the still darkness. Keto, the baby, and her cradle were gone from the far corner. Only a stack of snow-white linen on the table remained to show where Nina had been working. Alone beside the fire squatted Gogi and slumbered, his nose between his knees, his arms hugging his legs.

A tall figure loomed in the gray square of the

kitchen door and a jolly voice shouted, "Victory be to this house and to the master of it!"

Tired as he was, sleep was gone from Gogi in a moment, and stumbling hurriedly to his feet, he rushed across the earthen floor and into the arms of the newcomer. "To thee victory and long life!" he cried, as the newly arrived guest embraced him and kissed first one cheek and then the other. Then, wriggling from the hold of the tall man, Gogi faced the door and, cupping his hands, shouted toward the house, *"Deda! Deda! Natlia mowida!* Mother! Mother! Godfather is come!"

A light flickered in the dark house, and scarcely had the *natlia* seated himself on the bench which Gogi had dragged forward when Nina bustled into the kitchen to salute him. "Greetings to thee and welcome," said she with a hospitable smile, and from the sheltering flare of her wide woolen skirts Keto peeped with curious eyes at her brother's *natlia,* who looked very grand to her young gaze in his fine town-made clothes and tall polished boots of glistening goatskin.

Arm in arm from the barn, whither they had taken the horses, came Vasso and Uncle Kola. While Uncle Kola exchanged greetings with Nina

and a bashful, sleepy Keto, Vasso untied his carpet-cloth saddlebags and took from one side a three-cornered bundle.

"It is a *batchi,*" cried Gogi joyfully. He lifted the *batchi* from the table to try its weight. It was the almost meatless shoulder bone of a cow, but in Guria, where beef is seldom slaughtered, it is very rare and difficult to buy. The Gurian host who is able to place a *batchi* before his guests is certain of their hearty praise.

Vasso dragged a huge silver watch from a leathern pouch sewed safely to the band of his breeches, and glancing at the daggerlike Turkish figures on its round dial, he said, "It is near midnight. Let us make ready. And you, Nina, and you, Keto—get you to your women's business."

Nina and Keto returned to the house, and to the menfolk standing at the kitchen door soon came the rattle of the closing door and its wooden bar that clanged into place to lock it.

"Follow me," said Vasso to the men; and to Gogi he added, "Bring the Beard, Gogo-heart."

The little party, led by Vasso, entered the wine shed. Inside the shed lay the long hollowed log in which the grapes were trampled to crush out the wine. On the log lay a huge wooden bowl as

big as a washtub. The bowl was heaped high with every sort of good thing.

The curly ends of sugar sausages and the fat sides of winter melons peeped from the slopes of a great pyramid of fruit and nuts that was piled in its center. Around the rim in rows lay ears of golden corn; a hank of silk and one of wool; a lump of yellow beeswax and a twist of home-grown tobacco; a sprig of tea leaves and one of bay; and carrots and beets and a cabbage—in short, it was a real cornucopia.

"Here, Carrier of the Beard," said Vasso, "pick fruit for your cross."

Gogi grabbed in the pile of goodies, and taking up a huge rosy apple, he speared it on the sharpened end of the sapling from which the Beard was whittled. On the points of the crosspiece he thrust a pear and a pomegranate. Picking up another pomegranate, Gogi dug into its dry, red skin with the ends of his fingers and made its scarlet juice spurt out in little jets that peppered the white floss of the Beard with a thousand tiny blood-red splashes.

"Now," said Gogi, "it is my turn to lead." Lifting the Beard to his shoulder, he waved a hand and cried, "Follow me—*Abba!*"

The group ascended the slope from the wine shed to the house. First came Gogi, the Carrier of the Beard; then followed the *natlia-mama* and Uncle Kola in single file; Vasso, with the heavy wooden tub balanced on his head, brought up the rear.

Straight to the door led Gogi, and struggling up the steep, ladderlike steps with the cumbersome Beard, he rapped thrice on the fast-barred door with his knuckles.

"Who is this?" inquired the voice of Nina from within.

"It is I, St. Basil," answered Gogi.

"What would you of this house, good St. Basil?" questioned Nina, without, however, opening the locked door.

"I bring to this house a new year with many good things," answered Gogi, in the way that he had heard his father speak in other years.

But Nina seemed hard to please, for again she asked, "What bring you, good St. Basil?"

"I bring heavy ears of golden corn," replied Gogi patiently. "And sweet syrup of mulberries; and wool and fruit and honey in the comb; and much good cheese and tall tobacco with broad leaves."

"It is a lean new year that you bring, good St. Basil," said Nina in a disappointed tone, and Gogi knew that he had failed in guessing the thing that his mother wished most of all for the coming year. It was all a game, and Gogi knew, too, what was to be done.

He slipped down the steps to the ground and whispered with the others. "What can it be that *deda* wishes?" he inquired of his father.

"Can it be," suggested Vasso, "a length of thin cotton goods with bright flowers on it such as she saw in the bazaar? Or perhaps it is a pair of scarlet *toufli* for baby Morro's feet."

"If it is a picture book for Keto, I have it," said the *natlia*. "Also I have brought a new black kerchief for Nina."

"It is hard to guess a woman's thoughts," said Uncle Kola. "If it were a man, I would say that he wanted a good crop of grapes or a new saddle or a bridle with silver buckles—but who knows what a woman wants?"

Again Gogi mounted the steps. He knocked at the closed door a second time and again the same questions were exchanged.

Said Gogi, "I bring young lambs and baskets of juicy grapes and shoes for baby Morro; I

bring love and a silk kerchief and printed cloth from the city to the mistress of this house."

At the mention of the printed cloth the bolt rattled and the door swung open. "Enter, St. Basil, and welcome to this house," laughed Nina, as she embraced Gogi and dragged him into the house. "*Gomarjos Akhalia Tselitsadi!* Hail to the New Year! *Gomarjos!*" shouted the men below, and Uncle Kola and the *naibi*, drawing pistols from their belts, fired shot after shot into the still night air as they greeted the new year. The echoes came ringing back from the mountains, and with them came the added sounds of other gunshots from the neighboring hamlet and faint shouts of other merrymakers.

Gogi placed the Beard in the corner of the room beneath the holy picture with its little rushlight, and the company sat down to a small table in the center of the room, for in Georgia the new year is ushered in with food and drink. Nina brought cold chicken and a big slab of steaming corn bread that had been warmed in the hot ashes of the brass *mangal* that stood in the room. "Good appetite," said Nina to the men as she placed the food before them.

The *naibi* made a place for Gogi at his side

and, thrusting a hand into the deep pocket of his town-made clothes, produced a package which he smuggled into the boy's palm.

"A chocolate bar," thought Gogi, his mouth watering as he recognized the red paper wrapper with the silver foil protruding from its ends. He took the chocolate bar carefully from its bright cover and broke it in half. As he nibbled one sweet half he tucked the other back into the paper. "I shall save a piece for Vanno," said Gogi to himself. "The *natlia* says that it makes those who eat it strong and Vanno will have need of much strength when he wrestles at the feast to-morrow."

Gogi nestled against the tall figure of his godfather, very sleepy but very happy and proud that he was counted a young man and sat at the table with his father and his guests.

When the men had broken their fast the *natlia* filled a great horn with red wine and, looking straight at Vasso, he said as he drank, "Hail to this family and long life!"

"Hail to thee, *natlia*, and to thee long life," replied Vasso, bowing and touching first his stomach, then his lips, and last his brow in salute.

Then the *natlia* caught up the bare drumstick, the meat of which had been his share of the meal,

and twining it between the fingers of one hand, he snapped the bone in twain with one swift gesture. This was a custom, and as he did it he turned to Nina and said, "Health and strength to the hands that cooked this fowl!"

"Good appetite to the *natlia,*" replied Nina, pleased with the compliment.

As the things were cleared from the table Uncle Kola took down the guitar from its nail in the wall and thrummed the strings as he tuned the instrument. The *natlia* and Vasso rolled thick funnel-shaped cigarettes from a wooden box that Nina placed on the table, and Gogi snuggled still closer to the *natlia* and dozed.

"Our little frog is asleep," Gogi heard his godfather say; and he felt his strong arms around him as the *natlia* lifted him from the bench and placed him on the soft felt of the *takhta.* Nina came and drew the warm folds of the coverlet over his tired legs. Uncle Kola twanged softly at the strings of his guitar; the *natlia* spoke in a low tone with Vasso about the news from the city. Somewhere on the hills above a lone jackal howled mournfully; Gogi slept in his corner and dreamed of the coming feast, and the wrestling match, and his hero, Vanno, the blacksmith's son.

V

The New Year Feast and Wrestling

"SEE!" said Gogi to little Keto, as they stood in the early dawn at the kitchen door. "It is as I told you. Vanno is our first guest."

"Of the New Year! Of the New Year!" shouted the blacksmith's sturdy son as he caught sight of the watching pair.

"The best of the New Year to Vanno, the son

of Grigo," answered the brother and sister, and Gogi thought, "It is well, after all, that Vanno is the first, for if others were here he would not care, perhaps, to talk with a boy so young as I am." Aloud, he added by way of further greeting, "Our house is yours and our salt for your taste. Welcome!"

Keto knew, as well as her mother, how a guest should be treated, and when Vanno reached the door she was ready with a *koki* of water which she poured over his outstretched hands. "Long life to you, lady," said Grigo's son as he wiped his dripping fingers on the rough linen towel that Keto offered.

Gogi would have liked to sit and talk with Vanno of the wrestling match. He would have liked to take a peek at Vanno's wrestling shirt, for he was quite sure that it was a wrestling shirt that Vanno carried in the bundle slung over his broad shoulder. Nina's shrill call, however, robbed him of these pleasures. He must go to the mill for the meal.

Reaching the brook below the kitchen, Gogi followed its banks until he came to the little log hut that held the grist mill. Long before he arrived he could hear the Mmmmmmm-Mmmmm-

mmm-Mmmmmmmm of the spinning stones and the musical tinkle of the little stick that, bouncing on their rough sides, jiggled the yellow grains of corn in a flashing golden stream from a wooden hopper into the hollow of the grinding stones.

With a paddle that was tied to the box about the stones, Gogi scraped and scooped a sackful of the fluffy drifts of creamy-yellow corn meal. As he worked, still more sifted out in little flurries like flying snow from between the grinders that spun so swiftly, driven by the water wheel beneath the mill.

By the time Gogi had left the sack of fresh meal with Nina and reached the front of the house a group of twenty or more guests had arrived. This was not strange to Gogi. Many guests came because his father Vasso was a man much esteemed by his neighbors and kinsmen and Nina was famous for her cooking. To Vasso's house, too, came people from the city such as the *natlia,* who was a wealthy and wise man, and Uncle Kola, who was a clerk at the Tiflis Courthouse. Such people had much to tell which the villagers and farmers were eager to hear.

The group of guests gathered in a close circle about two figures that sat on the stoop—a wrin-

kled old man and a youth of sixteen or seventeen. The old man took from the breast of his long worsted coat a hollow wooden pipe with a broad reed of cornstalk. The youth unslung from his back a deep drum, and when the elder had tuned the pipe to his taste the two began to play.

At first they played slowly, while the circle of men clapped their hands or stood, hands on hips, beating time with their toes. One measure, two measures, three were played ere with a sharp cry one of the circle leaped into its middle and began a dance.

One hand on his hip, the other hand held high, the dancer glided, spun, and turned from one side of the close ring to the other. Faster and faster piped the piper and louder and louder came the clapping of the onlookers. Here and there a watcher chanted a hissing:

"Tashi! Tashi! . . . Tashi! Tashi!"

A hand appeared from without the circle holding a glass of wine. Without missing a step of his dizzy dance, the dancer grasped the glass and placed it on his bared head. This done, he seemed to whirl even faster than before. His soft-booted feet flew back and forth like the wind, and the long skirts of his coat stood out as he spun. With

drawn dagger and steps ten times harder than any he had danced before, he made one last mad round and halting at the feet of the musicians, snatched the brimming glass from his head to drink it amid a storm of applause and loud shouts of "Hail, Hail!"

When the dance ended the circle broke up and regathered about the long table which Vasso had built the morning before. "Hail to our *tulumbash!*" cried Vasso, pressing a huge horn of wine into the big hand of Grigo the blacksmith, who lived with his son Vanno in the valley below. This meant that Grigo had been chosen the Head of the Table for the time of the feast. It was his duty to see that everyone got a full share of the food, no matter how shy they might be; and it was Grigo's horn that would be first raised in every toast in turn—to the house of Vasso, to his wife and family, to his good fortune in the new year, and to Vasso himself and all the guests in turn.

The musicians, too, sat at the table, and when a pause came in the feasting they would strike up a lively tune and the guests would join in a merry song. Sometimes a guest would rise from his seat and dance as had the first.

At last the table was emptied. The little piles of salt and the steaming heaps of corn-meal mush stuffed with melting hunks of cheese that stood on the bare boards between each pair of guests had dwindled and disappeared. A little gravy specked with flakes of red pepper was all that remained of the heaping bowls of *tsutsivi,* and of the great pig, the stripped bones alone remained.

Then it was that Grigo, the Head of the Table, took up the *batchi.* Drawing his sharp knife from its sheath at his belt, he carved and passed to each guest a morsel of gristly meat from the shoulder. When the last one had been served Grigo raised the big shovel-shaped bone high in his strong right hand and brought it smashing down on the knuckles of his left with a blow that shattered it into a dozen pieces. It was a custom, and turning to Vasso he said, "Long life to the *padrone* (master) of this house! Glory to his bread and salt and may he crush his evils as I have crushed this *batchi!*"

As Grigo was finishing this last toast his son Vanno beckoned Gogi to his side and whispered, "Bring my wrestling shirt from the corner of your kitchen where I left it."

When Gogi returned with the wrestling shirt or coat, Vanno stood ready for the match. Opposite him stood another young man who was perhaps a few years older but about the same weight. Both were barefooted and stripped to the waist. As Gogi approached he unrolled the coat. It was very much like a rough woolen dressing gown from which the sleeves had been ripped, and the back of which had been slit from the bottom up to the belt.

Vanno slipped his muscular bare arms through the holes of the garment, and as he fastened the front with leather laces he cried to Gogi, "Tie the knot with a lucky hand, Gogi; tie the knot!"

Gogi knew what was expected of him, although he had never done it before. He lifted the split skirts of the coat and tied them in a firm knot at Vanno's waist. "The fortune and blessing of White Georgi be with you, Vanno!" he cried, as he completed his task and stepped back into the ring of guests that stood awaiting the match.

The ever-present musicians began a merry tune. Vanno and his opponent began to circle one another in a sort of dance. They lifted their feet high from the ground as they pranced and leaped to the music of the pipe and drum. Now and then

one or the other would stoop as he danced and rub the palms of his hands in the dirt of the yard. This was to give them a better grip with no fear of slipping when the real battle began.

"They are like a couple of roosters," thought Gogi, as he watched the two wrestlers circle and stoop; "and the loose ends of their wrestling coats stick out behind as do the tails of roosters."

"They have a hold," shouted an excited voice. As though tired of playing about the wrestlers had at last grappled. Each had grasped the other by the loose breast folds of the wool coats with one hand, while they fought to catch the tail-like knot in the other.

Back and forth they strained. Their bare arms and foreheads became moist with little drops of sweat that gathered and streamed down their hot faces in trickles. The music still played but their feet no longer danced; they seemed rather to be glued to the earth. Their heads were pressed together like two fighting rams, and their breath came in little sobs and sucks.

Gogi watched the wide-spread feet of Vanno. As he watched, one foot crept slowly backward; Vanno's head twisted to one side and with a quick swing his free right arm shot over the youth's

shoulder and clutched his knotted coat. The rear foot shot forward to strike his opponent's stiff knee; a grunt, a mighty heave, and Vanno stood, hand raised in victory, over the prone form of his antagonist.

There was a moment's pause and then the watchers shouted in one voice, "Glory to the victor—life to Vanno, the son of Grigo!" Hands began to clap; the music played still louder, and Vanno danced again. This time it was the dance of the victor. "This, too, is like the roosters," thought Gogi, and he was very happy that his own friend had won the match. He was even happier when Vanno had finished his dance, for the smith's son came straight to his side and kissed him thrice on the cheek.

"Life to the hand that tied the knot of my wrestling coat," said he. "Thanks to you, Gogi-heart!"

"Not to me be thanks," answered Gogi in a happy voice. "But to my Holy Namesake to Whom I prayed—thanks be to White St. Georgi, the Victorious."

So passed the Feast of St. Basil, and as evening came on the guests began to depart in one's and two's for their homes. Those who lived far-

thest left first, and Nina and Keto were kept busy in preparing for each one a lunch for the road. On long spears of wood were stuck lumps of bread and slices of meat, a round pat of cheese or perhaps an apple or pomegranate. Each departing guest rode up on his horse to bid farewell and receive his lunch. The remaining men admired and criticised each horse in turn and fingered the long steel bits and the silver-medallioned bridles before the rider galloped away with a flourish and a shouted good-bye, accompanied by a fusillade of pistol shots and wishes for a "good road."

Night found Gogi again in his bed and Vasso, Uncle Kola, and the *natlia* seated at the table. Uncle Kola again thrummed the strings of his guitar and hummed a little tune. Vasso and the *natlia-mama* spoke in low tones and Gogi dreamed —dreamed not of the day to come, but of the day that had gone; of the dancing and the songs; of the prancing horses and shiny high saddles and jingling bits; and best of all, he dreamed of the wrestling match and Vanno, the smith's son, as he stood over his beaten opponent.

VI

The Feast of the Baptism and The Tale of the Khevsours

ONE morning in January Vasso did not rise from his seat at the broad kitchen table on finishing his breakfast. Instead, he leaned back against the wall and casually rolled a stubby funnel-shaped cigarette from coarse tobacco, meanwhile motioning Keto to bring him a coal from the open kitchen fire.

Long blue spirals ascended from the burning tip of Vasso's cigarette and, blending with the smoke clouds from the kitchen fire, floated out into the morning air through the round opening in the kitchen ceiling. It was the Feast of the

Baptism, and Vasso, banishing all thoughts of work, sat lazily watching his wife and daughter at their daily chores. The baby, as usual, slept.

Gogi was not at home; he had set out in the first early light for the church at Ozerget to be at the "Blessing of the Water." While Nina and Keto busied themselves in the kitchen and Vasso sat and smoked, Gogi stood with a throng of friends and kinsmen on the bank of the little stream that flowed beside the old stone church in the village.

Nearest the stream stood the bent old priest, surrounded by deacons and singers. After a long chant in which priest, deacons, and choir participated, the old priest raised his wrinkled hands aloft and blessed the water in the name of the Holy Trinity. From the hands of a deacon he received a silver cross, and after this, too, had been blessed he recalled in a few words Christ's baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, and cast the cross into the water with a gentle splash.

Immediately all was excitement; a dozen young men cast themselves, clothed as they were, into the chilly stream, seeking the cross. First a deacon filled a huge silver bowl with the blessed

water; then, group by group, the villagers approached the brook and filled the jars and flasks with which they had prepared themselves.

It was held by many that this water had the power of healing; such water could be kept for years without losing its sweetness or becoming murky. What better proof of its good properties could be desired?

When all had amply supplied themselves with holy water they fell in line behind the priest to be led in song and prayer from the brook to the church. With lighted candles and swinging censers the procession moved along; at every step the aged priest blessed his flock and, dipping a little broom of hyssop into the deacon's huge bowl, sprinkled them all with tiny drops of holy water.

When the procession disbanded at the church Gogi did not tarry with the scattered groups that remained about the door to jest and gossip. Tying together the long necks of his several earthen jars of holy water, he slung them carefully over his shoulder and set out for home with the long swinging stride of the hill people.

As Gogi neared home his store of water be-

came smaller and smaller, for at gate after gate he was greeted by some neighbor who had been unable to attend the Blessing of the Water, but who craved a few drops of the holy liquid. Gogi gladly parted with a small share to each that asked and as gladly pocketed the occasional coppers they offered with their thanks. By the time he joined his parents and sister in the kitchen he had disposed of almost all of his water; only one small jug remained and this he gave to his mother, who received it with a devout sign of the cross.

Gogi seated himself at the table and Keto set before him his share of the breakfast. As he ate, his father inquired after the health of his kinsmen and friends whom Gogi had seen at the church.

The boy had something to tell of each. To his father's inquiry concerning the priest's visits to the parishioners' homes (an event which follows the Blessing of the Water), Gogi replied that the good man would travel first on the Lantchout road. Nina then knew that the priest would be with them soon after midday and that there would be no need to make ready for him a special meal. One large hen, broiled, would be enough.

True to Nina's forecast the shadows had just begun to lengthen when the priest and his attendant deacon appeared at the bend of the road. Sharp-eyed Keto, as always, saw them first and ran excitedly screaming the news to her mother.

They were ahorse, and the priest rode first, hands folded on the high pommel and the long skirts of his heavy woolen cassock gathered about his legs to free his feet. A few paces to the rear rode the gloomy deacon in a worn *tchokka;* under one arm he held a bulky bundle wrapped in white linen. They slackened their pace as they turned into the yard, and Gogi raced forward to grasp the reins of their horses.

The reverend couple halted before the stoop and before dismounting the priest raised his hands and blessed the smiling family that stood on the porch to greet him.

This little ceremony observed, the priest climbed from his pony and, shaking out the folds of his cassock, allowed himself to be ushered into the house by the bowing family. The deacon, after turning the mounts over to Gogi's care, followed his superior and received his share of the bowing and hand shaking.

Once in the house the group made their way to the large front room, in the corner of which the family's holy pictures or icons hung, lighted by the feeble flicker of a tiny scarlet rushlight. The priest donned a gold-embroidered surplice which the deacon produced from his white bundle, fixed his gaze on the burning icon, and began to gesture and pray.

Meanwhile the deacon took his silver bowl from the bundle, also, and placed it on a little table which Nina had covered with a spotless white coverlet. He then poured into the bowl a few drops of the precious holy water which Gogi had that morning brought from the church brook after the Blessing, and lighting several tiny wax tapers, gave one to each of the family except baby Morro, who lay quietly watching them from her little crib.

His prayer completed, the priest motioned to the deacon to take up the bowl of water. Then followed a service just like the one at the brook-side church. Priest and deacon, followed by the family, walked slowly from room to room carrying burning tapers. The deacon chanted in a great deep voice and the priest, dipping his little broom

of hyssop into the bowl, sprinkled the corners, doorposts, and floor of the little home with holy water and blessings.

Baby Morro came in for a good share of both blessings and water, and both seemed to please her, for she cooed happily and caught at the little droplets with one free hand.

Nor were the blessings confined to the house. Barnyard and cattle sheds, chicken house, kitchen, and beehives were all blessed and sprinkled before the good priest became content. At last, however, the round was made and the group reëntered the house, where Nina had spread a table with food.

Here the priest mumbled a last prayer, and with a sign of the cross that took in the whole table and company, he sat down to meat.

The priest and his assistant had eaten at an earlier stop so their hunger was soon satisfied, but the good men were tired and Vasso was a man to whom everyone liked to talk. Keto's shyness wore off after a while and, reassured by the smile of the old priest, she searched beneath the felt mattress of her *takhta* and brought out the book of pictures which the *natlia* had given her at the Feast of St. Basil.

"What is this?" asked the priest, as he took the book from her outstretched hand.

"It is a book of tales which the Frankish children read," replied Keto. "The words are in the letters of the foreigners but the pictures are colored and very beautiful to see, Little Father."

The priest took a pair of spectacles with square glasses from the lining of his fur hat, and adjusting them on the end of his long red nose, he opened the painted covers of the Frankish story book.

"It is a shame that such good paper should be used for tales," grumbled the old man. "It is thick and glossy and as smooth as glass."

He turned several pages and paused at the picture of a gnome. "Who is this little hunchback?" he inquired with a frown.

In a few words Keto repeated the tale of the gnome as the *natlia* had told it to her.

"The tale is a good one," agreed the priest, "but the man has an evil look."

The priest turned a few more pages and came to the bright picture of a knight in armor. The knight was mounted on a snow-white horse, and the shield which he carried on his arm and the flag on the haft of his long spear were marked with the sign of the cross.

"The good man's wrinkled old face broke into a pleased smile as he admired the brave picture. "Surely," said he, "this good knight is a Defender of the Faith! What other would carry the holy sign of our Lord?"

"It is the king of the *Inglisi,*" said Keto. "I know the tale. He was called *Levis-guli,* the Lion-hearted, and he fought for the Holy Sepulchre."

"Aye," said the priest, "I have heard of him; and who has not, for excepting our own White Georgi there was none greater than he unless it was perhaps Gurg-Arslan—the Wolf-Lion of Georgia."

"Did White Georgi fight for the Holy Sepulchre?" inquired Gogi. "Our Gurian bowmen fought with the Saracens, did they not, Little Father?"

"There were no longer bows than ours drawn against the infidels," said the priest proudly. "Our Gurian arrows were so big that a young pig could be roasted on one; but White Georgi had been in heaven many years at that time. In heaven to greet our Gurian bowmen, for few returned from that last Holy War."

"But were not the Khevsuri who live on the steep mountain slopes of Svaneti Defenders of

the Faith?" asked Vasso, who had traveled over all Georgia and knew many strange places.

"Yes," assented the priest. "The Khevsuri were Carriers of the Cross, but they are not Georgians."

"Who are the Khevsuri," asked Gogi, who was always eager to learn of new things.

"The Khevsuri are flaxen-haired and have square heads," explained the Little Father. "They are not like our raven-haired, round-headed Georgians, for they are foreigners. Their people are the Germani, and the fathers of our Khevsuri were Carriers of the Cross who, returning from the Holy War by the road through our country, met with so many hardships that they despaired of ever again seeing their homeland. With the Georgians they found a warm Christian welcome and bread and salt."

"But they do not live with us," wondered Keto. "Why do they live high in the mountains where there is much cold and little to eat when they might be happier on warm lower slopes?"

The old priest frowned as though the question puzzled him. "Who can say the thoughts of Germani?" he replied. "They are not Georgians, for they do not speak our tongue nor do they drink our wine. They have their own priests and their

own churches high in the mountains. The paths to them would try the skill of our sure-footed Gurian hillmen. Their very fields are so steep that when they harvest their wheat, which grows no higher than sheep's grass, they are forced to tie themselves with ropes to get a footing."

"Do their priests bless them and their houses as you have ours this feast day?" asked Gogi, wanting to learn still more of his strange neighbors.

"I fear they do not," responded the priest with a sigh. "They have lost many of their Christian ways in the high mountains. On feast days they bring out the old armor which has been handed down from father to son and, donning it, they fight with sword and spear as did their forefathers at the side of the brave king of the *Inglisi.*"

"Oh!" cried Gogi excitedly. "They still have their old swords? And do they hurt one another?"

"They sometimes hurt one another very badly," said the priest with a sad shake of his gray head. "And they still have their fathers' old swords and shields. This is true because the weapons are marked with tiny crosses and half-moons stamped in the rusty steel. Each tiny cross means that some good Christian owned the sword or shield,

and each half-moon shows that it was in the hands of an infidel."

"I see," said Gogi. "If a sword has three half-moons and four crosses it shows that it belonged at different times to three infidels and four Christians."

"You are right," said the Little Father, and closing the story book with a start, as though he had just remembered how long he had tarried in one house, he rose to go.

Amid farewells the priest and his deacon mounted their horses, which Gogi had brought to the bottom of the steps. As they trotted through the gate and down the road Gogi turned and gazed up at the ice-capped peaks of the towering mountains.

"They fight with sword and spear like their fathers did at the side of the Lion-hearted! The Carriers of the Cross are still alive," thought he. "And they in our own mountains!"

The rays of the setting sun flashed back from the snowclad ridges, and to Gogi they were the flashing swords and shields and spearheads of Saracens and Carriers of the Cross. To him it seemed that he heard the angry thudding of their war horses' mad feet and the resounding blows

of sword on shield. But it was only the drumming of Nina's *katok* as she rolled the wrinkles from her store of fresh-washed linen, and the ringing strokes of Vasso's heavy ax as he split the wood for the kitchen fire.

VII

A Trip to the Village Smithy

THE time came when passing neighbors always spoke of plowing. If they were driving carts one was almost certain to see the long handles of a plow jutting out beyond the tailboard like a huge pair of horns. They would be taking their plows to Grigo, the smith, for sharpening or, what is more likely, to be fitted with new irons.

One day a passing villager from the upper valley stopped before the gate to rest and to tell

Vasso that it was now his turn at the smithy. Grigo expected him and his work with the rising sun. As the dusty traveler refreshed himself with a great gourd dipper of red wine which Nina had hastened to bring him, he told of meeting others at the smithy—of what they each had said, how many *ksevs* of corn and how much tobacco they hoped to plant, and whether the rains would kill the silkworms. And Gogi, standing with his hands folded respectfully across his stomach, listened with delight and thought of the morrow.

Just as the first glow of dawn began to fringe the jagged black mountain wall with silver a voice called out and Gogi crept sleepily from his warm couch. He shivered a little as he stood half dozing, for the draft that filtered up through the cracks of the rough floor boards was still uncomfortably sharp with the chill of night. He groped about him in search of his clothing and when questing fingers grasped the soft, smooth silkiness of his holiday *tchokka* instead of the familiar harsh wool of his everyday blouse he remembered with a pleasant shock the reason for it, and all thoughts of another little nap were at once forgotten. Grigo, the smith; Vanno, his son; the

forge, the buffaloes to be shod, and old friends to be seen once again! A great day, indeed!

Gogi was soon dressed and a moment later slipped noiselessly through the door, across the narrow porch, and down the steep steps. As he passed the water *koki,* he snatched it up to his lips and took a big mouthful of its water, which he spurted into his hands and splashed over his face as he hastened toward the black barns. The yard was shadowy in the gray half-light that comes before daybreak, and near the silent sheds the empty bullock cart, with its pole and dangling yoke pointed skyward, stood pale and ghostly like the gaunt white skeleton of some strange beast.

A wheezy sigh and a slight rustle told Gogi that the buffaloes slept in the deep shadow of the wine press, and taking up a little stick, he urged them grumblingly to their feet and drove them with sharp prods and soft words in the direction of the tilted cart. When the animals came under the hanging yoke, Gogi halted them and mounting the cart, clambered up the pole so that with his added weight he forced it down in a wide curve until a buffalo's neck was snugly caught in each joke. The yoke on, Gogi lashed the ends of the great forks fitted to either end of the wooden

forks that reached below the loose folds of the animals' neck with strips of raw-hide, and the cart was ready for the road.

As Gogi made fast the last leather thong his father descended the steps of the house, his saddle swinging across his shoulder.

"*Ess ki sakme!* (Good work)," said Vasso, well pleased at finding the cart and team ready and waiting. And as he strode on toward the barn he added: "Bring, now, the *khurjhini* from their place in the kitchen."

Gogi, after first taking a short stout stick from the front of the cart and placing it under the tip of the pole so that its weight would be lifted from the drowsing bullocks' necks, made his way across the brightening yard to the little hut on the brook's edge where food was stored and cooked. On a convenient peg, driven into a chink of the log wall, he found the *khurjhini,* or saddlebags. Their strong carpet sides, woven in gay colored patterns, bulged out to the bursting point, and the narrow strip of frayed leather that bound the bags together stretched and creaked as Gogi lifted them down onto his head.

The bags were far too heavy and bulky for Vasso's saddle, so Gogi slung them by their strap

over the slatted side of the cart. He then took the stick from beneath the pole and led the team to the yawning black door of the barn. From the inner darkness came the sound of clanking bit and stirrups and the occasional cluckings of Vasso to quiet the impatient pony. Presently Gogi's father emerged, leading the saddled horse. He threw the loose reins over the big wooden tholepin that held the yoke to the pole of the cart and, calling to Gogi, turned back to where the awkward wooden plow leaned against the wall of the barn. Together, father and son, they dragged it from its place and loaded it upon the waiting cart.

Gogi, after hunting about a bit, found a flat splinter of wood which he dipped into a ram's horn filled with soft soap that hung by a loop to the frame of the cart. With a liberal daub of the horn's contents on the end of his chip, he crawled under the cart and freely smeared the smooth wooden axle with the slimy, greasy mess. Georgian carts have their solid wooden wheels fixed fast to large strong axles which turn in a half-round nest on the bottom of the body, and if the axle were not well covered with soap or something similar it would soon grow very hot

and might, perhaps, even burst into flames. At the very least, it would rapidly wear away under the heavy loads it is called upon to carry.

All was now ready for the trip and Vasso, lifting the reins from the tholepin, mounted his shaggy, slim-legged pony. He looked very grand as he rode for the gate, seated erectly on the fat leather cushion of his high Circassian saddle. The pony arched his neck and swerved as his thudding feet beat an impatient tattoo on the soft dirt path. As Vasso waved his quirt in a last signal for the start Gogi turned to his ugly, workaday steeds with something almost like a sigh, for he, too, yearned for a prancing, dashing pony, a tall black saddle with pearl studs, and a red tasseled saddle pad of brilliant felt.

"Still," thought he, "it is not given to everybody to drive so fine a yoke of buffaloes as ours are!" And with that he perched himself atop the broad timber of the great yoke. "Ho, Rustam! Ho, Nazira!" he shouted in a voice as much like Vasso's as he could make it. "Come along, my darlings, come along," he urged, and gave each a resounding whack with a thin switch he carried.

Now a little twig such as this could never sting

the tough and almost hairless hide of a water buffalo, but both the great coal-black beasts grumbled and complained loudly and made their strange blue-gray eyes appear very fierce and terrible. This, however, is just a way that water buffaloes have, and they lumbered off, with much pawing of their feet and shaking of their sharp black horns, dragging the creaking cart behind them. Gogi sat between the two black heads, feet dangling, and sang a song as he swayed to the steady swing of his team.

"Ho——h la, ho——h la,
Ho——h la, ho——h."

Gogi's song would not have been much of a song in a town or city. It had very few notes and no words at all, but it sounded well to Gogi and the buffaloes seemed to like it. It might, in fact, have pleased anyone who chanced to hear it on that clear cool morning silence, for as he sang a note it echoed and reëchoed from the hills and woods until there was something very much like a whole choir singing "hoh-la, hoh-la" in all sorts of wonderful combinations, to which the cart played a creaky, fluty accompaniment.

The road to the smithy stretched downhill and the wooden yoke, slipping forward, rested on the strong horns of the two buffaloes. They threw their heads back to take the strain and held their necks so low that a stranger would have expected their end any minute. This, again, was just the buffaloes' strange way of doing things, for going downhill at a slow walk was exactly what they liked to do. They did not mind hard work, either, and never balked if they were not thirsty or did not chance to get the silly notion of taking a mud bath. Water buffaloes are very fond of baths, and when they are very tired they sometimes balk and demand a nice bath of cool mud. To-day, however, they were neither tired nor hot, so they trudged patiently along the road to Grigo and his smithy. No motorcycles dashed sputteringly by, and no motor cars passed to crowd them into the roadside ditches or fill their blue eyes and moist noses with blinding, stifling dust. In truth, the only really unpleasant thing that can happen to a water buffalo in Georgia is a visit to the shoeing smith, and they did not know, as yet, that they were booked for one.

One *verst,* two *versts,* four *versts* of the rutted clay road crawled beneath the bouncing, rattling

cart before the latter topped a little crest and Gogi caught his first glimpse of the familiar smithy in the valley below. Excited with its nearness, he jumped down from his swaying seat and urged his team forward with a renewed zeal. But the lumbering pair refused to quicken their measured, shambling pace.

Vasso had ridden rapidly ahead, and Gogi fancied that he could pick his father's horse from among the jostling group that stood about Grigo's long hitching rack. Never had buffaloes seemed so slow. The last quarter *verst* seemed longer than the first two, but it, too, passed, and Gogi brought his team to a willing halt before the smithy door with a loud "Bbbbbbbbb!"

Vanno appeared from the sooty depths of his father's shop, and after giving Gogi a bearlike embrace and warm greeting, took a grimy hand in unyoking the team. Having recognized the smithy for what it was, the buffaloes were becoming disturbed, and Vanno with all his wrestler's strength was scarcely able to drag them to the shoeing block.

When the animals were safely tied the two boys entered the smithy. Full in the light of the open double doors stood Grigo's slender, sharp-pointed

anvil. It was driven into a huge block of walnut wood, and a little to one side a heavy slab of iron rested on another, smaller block. This second anvil was the one used in flattening the thin iron plates with which buffaloes were shod.

Behind the anvils, but within an easy pace of them, stood the forge, with a hood of iron to catch the smoke and sparks. In the gloom of the smithy its smoldering charcoal embers gleamed like the cheerful red eye of some friendly demon. Slung fast to the rafters above the forge hung the giant leather bellows, and a long, seamy leather hose, like an elephant's wrinkled trunk, curled snakily down from its smaller end to feed the fire with air.

When Gogi's eyes had become accustomed to the murkiness he was able to recognize the blacksmith and his father, Vasso, among a group in the farther corner. A half dozen men, some on their saddles and some on their own heels, sat in a close circle about a disused anvil block. On the block's broad flat top were scattered great hunks of corn bread, juicy slices of fresh cheese, and fragments of roasted chicken. On the dirt floor at Grigo's side stood a brown clay *koki.* It was filled, no doubt, with wine, for even as Gogi

looked the smith lifted the slim-necked jar and filled from it a shiny black drinking horn which he passed with a salute and a reverent "God given" to his nearest neighbor.

No place was made at the makeshift table for young Gogi, but he was met with friendly greeting by friend and stranger alike, and Grigo's horny but hospitable hand passed him a liberal helping from the pile of food. Vanno, after his first friendly embrace, seemed to think that he had fully repaid his young friend for his warm support and admiration at the last New Year's wrestling match. His sixteen years and big muscles gave him a place with his elders which he hastened to resume.

Gogi, left to his own devices, wandered about the shop, gazing interestedly at the sprawling piles of newly forged hoes and mattocks and timidly fingering the smooth handles of Grigo's hammers and tongs. He placed his thick slice of cheese on the forge fire to toast, and even gave the bellows rope a few timid jerks to blow the fire. When a few sparks flew crackling up he became bolder and pulled harder. More sparks crackled and flew, and then there came a little spurt of yellow flame. It was Gogi's forgotten

slice of cheese. He rescued it from the fiery furnace and proudly ate it, although there was little left after he had scraped the char from it.

The men finished their meal and arose, wiping the food crumbs from their long mustachios with the backs of their hands. Some moved across to choose new hoes, mattocks, and spades from the piles on the floor. One small knot of curious ones collected about an American all-metal plow that awaited repairs. They loudly praised its graceful curves and gay red paint and exclaimed in surprise at its unexpected light weight. With all its breadth of keen steel share and its metal frame it was still far lighter than the native wooden tools. These are made by the Georgian farmer and are little more than a crooked stick shod with a point of iron.

Meanwhile Grigo and Vanno had thrown the resisting buffaloes to the ground and lashed their feet to two long poles, each end of which rested in the waist-high crotch of a forked stick driven into the earth. Buffaloes are very agile kickers, and as they greatly dislike being shod, they must be well tied.

Father and son took each an animal, and in a trice the old shoe plates, thin as paper, were

ripped off. Since the feet were turned up in so convenient a position it took very little time to file a smooth surface and firmly nail a new half-circle of iron plate to each half of a cloven hoof. Released from their uncomfortable position, when the job was completed, the buffaloes seemed to know that their misery was over. They stood with hanging heads and docile as lambs.

Vasso, like most Georgians, had some skill in all trades, and when Gogi led the fresh-shod team back to the cart he found that his father had already fitted a plow iron without the smith's help. The plow was again in the cart, and beside it was a small pile of newly bought spades, mattocks, and hoes. Vasso's horse was gone from the rack and his saddle from the smithy. Vasso had returned, and Gogi was very proud that his father had trusted him to oversee the shoeing and find his own way home.

Gogi wished that he might ask Vanno to show him some wrestling holds and trick falls, but a glance at the long line of animals waiting to be shod told him that the smith's son would have little time for such talk.

As the rumbling cart and its small driver passed the smithy the smith dropped his task to wave

his gnarled hand in a cheery good-bye, and as Gogi turned out into the road he felt a touch on his arm. It was Vanno, and giving Gogi a hand clasp that nearly crushed the younger boy's fingers, the smith's son said:

"Surely we shall meet at the Easter wrestling and you shall tie my wrestling coat, for your hand brings luck. May your troubles be mine. Farewell!"

With these words Gogi received a mighty clout on his shoulder and he heard something fall clanking into his cart as Vanno turned and disappeared in the gloom of his father's shop. Gogi pulled the "something" out. It was a real steel trap for catching wild animals—one such as is to be bought in the shops of the cities—and Vanno had made it with his own hand as a thank offering in return for Gogi's admiration of his wrestling.

The buffaloes seemed to sense that they were on their homeward journey, for although the trail lay, for the most part, uphill they lumbered along at a rapid pace. The yoke swayed so violently with their speed that it no longer served as a comfortable seat for Gogi, so the boy trotted along beside his team and cut at the dry road-

side weeds and grasses with the now unnecessary switch.

As he trotted, Gogi sang a song. The echo answered. The cart creaked its accompaniment and the spades and mattocks made a merry jingling.

"Ho——h la, ho——h la,
Ho——h la, ho——h!"

VIII

Easter

IT WAS nearing midnight—Easter Eve.

High in the bell tower of the old stone church, amid the knotted ends of the swinging bell ropes, sat Shaliko Tomadze. Shaliko, bent and seventy, was the bell ringer of the church of Ozerget, and as he sat now on a ledge of the drafty bell tower and gazed with sad brown eyes through the narrow, slitlike window, the gentle spring breeze stirred his sparse gray beard.

An old tin lantern dimly lighted the tower

room, and in its rays the ropes looked black and strange. Their shadows writhed and squirmed on the stone walls like great crawling serpents. The night without was peaceful and the stars shone brightly. The putt-putt of the pumping engine at the water station was silent, and no sound broke the stillness but the occasional creak of a cart or rattle of hoofs as some belated worshiper arrived at the door of the church.

Here and there, in the dark yard below, a torch or smudge shed its smoky light. In the cover near the hedge stood a tent of homemade tapestries, and now and then a black figure entered bearing an Easter cake or cheese tarts. Later they would be blessed by the old priest.

Despite the fact that it was the eve of a great feast day, Shaliko was bored because he had nothing to do. But if someone had given him something to do he would have been still more dissatisfied, for he was lazy and loved only to talk and tell tales. His laziness would have brought him a death by starvation had not his wagging tongue won such a large circle of friends. Indeed, these friends had secured for him the post of bell ringer.

His face as a teller of tales actually brought

listeners up the dizzy steps to the tower room. They were mostly boys, and Shaliko was usually able to shift a fair share of his bell pulling onto them.

"A miserable hour," grumbled Shaliko to himself, frowning at the sputtering lamp. "Not one comes! When no one wants them they all come!"

After a little while, however, Shaliko heard the murmuring of voices and stifled giggles on the ladder that led to the tower room, and soon after a round black head with laughing eyes popped up through the trapdoor at Shaliko's side. One, then another and another, until three young lads stood before the old bell ringer.

They were Gogi, Givi, and Aleko. After a friendly greeting, all three spoke at one time and told an exciting story of how Givi had nearly fallen down the spiral stair as he stumbled in the darkness.

"You might well have made cheese of your nose," said Shaliko, shaking his gray head. "Were it not a feast day I would surely tell your father!"

"He has gone to the monastery," replied Givi bravely.

"It is a great night in the monastery, this night," interrupted Aleko. "My uncle took me

there last Easter. At midnight a rocket is touched off and they strike the great bell!"

"From where do they send the rocket?" inquired Gogi, who had not seen the monastery.

"They send it from the wall where the old iron cannon stands," explained Aleko. "Shaliko knows," he added.

"Aye, I know," agreed Shaliko, "for do I not await that same rocket as a signal for my own bells?"

"Have you seen the iron cannon?" asked Givi.

"I have that," said the old bell ringer proudly. "I have seen others, too, and fired from them."

"Were you in the war?"

"Of course," said Shaliko. "Tell me, pray, where I have not been."

"The war is terrible, is it not, Shaliko?"

"There is nothing terrible," denied the old man. "You get the order 'fire' and you fire."

"But what if one were to be killed?" said Gogi with a little shiver.

"Who?" demanded Shaliko.

"You, perhaps," answered Gogi.

"Those are foolish words," said Shaliko, scowling. "Who could kill me?"

"The enemy," guessed Gogi.

"Bring on your enemy," shouted old Shaliko, looking very fierce. "Their arms are too short. Bring them on—I'll break all their bones!"

On receiving no answer to this challenge, he fell silent for a while and then, as though ashamed of shouting so on a holy day, he said firmly:

"Our Easter is better than the Easter of any people! In truth it is the feast of feasts and the holiday of holidays."

The boys sat silent and listened.

"It is a crying shame," he continued, "that some of our brothers should believe as they do. It is a shame, but it is also funny," and Shaliko chuckled in his beard. "It is not right and I fear for them in the other world. I speak of the Tchoutchki in Siberia. I saw them when I was a soldier.

"They are a silly folk. To kill a dog is great fun for them. A dog is nothing, for they would just as soon kill their own father. This they sometimes do, when their parents grow too old to hunt for their own food and skins for clothing. All this is because they do not fear their god. They fear only (God forgive them) the goblins. They even pray to the goblins."

The boys laughed.

"That is truth," insisted Shaliko. "They be-

lieve that their god flew away into the sky and from him they expect neither good nor evil. I forget what they call him, but in our language it means, 'The Old One.' "

"But why do they pray to the goblins?" asked Gogi, fearing that the story had ended.

"They fear them and that is their faith," answered Shaliko. "What can be done about it? Our priest says that the first man was Adam; their priests say that ten thousand 'Adams' were made from clay—all at one time. They say that all these 'Adams' stood for a hundred years on a mountain. They stood on the same mountain, in fact, from which their god flew away into the sky. After a hundred years the god returned and gave them life by blowing upon them. And then, it is said, there came a great storm or whirlwind which whisked all the 'Adams' up into the air and dropped them, broad and far, over all the earth. Those which fell upon the ground became men. Others, which fell into trees and such-like, became women. That is their idea of the beginning of things!"

Shaliko paused, shaking his head slowly and clucking at the shame of it all.

"Our holiday is good—good for the soul, but

theirs . . .! True, it comes in the spring. In this, alone, is it like ours. They become wild. They slaughter whole herds of deer and feast and dance like savages. They sing also, and their songs would draw tears from the cold stone—nothing like our own beautiful Easter Chant."

Here the old man glanced toward the window just in time to see the last fading sparks left from the fiery arc of the falling signal rocket. He leaped to his feet, and as his trembling fingers were raised in the sign of the cross the solemn stillness was broken by the throaty clang of the great bell in the distant monastery. Up from the churchyard came a medley of laughter and noisy greetings.

"Christ is arisen," muttered the old bell ringer, again and again, crossing himself, while, at the same time, he watched the boys struggling to start the clapper of the great bell. Each succeeding swing brought the heavy tongue nearer and nearer until it barely touched the thick bronze rim of the tocsin. . . .

The walls trembled. The tin lamp rattled against the stones, and the air was split with a deafening, mighty note.

The worshipers filed out of the church with bared heads and lighted tapers. The holy pictures

were brought out and the banners. The singers emerged. The deacons followed, holding tall candles, and then came the priest with his cross held high. With song and prayer the congregation began the march around the church, led by the old priest.

Shaliko ceased his mutterings and, casting aside his fur hat, began to snatch at the tangle of bell ropes. One he would pull with his right hand, another with his left. Sometimes he would pull with both at once. All the while, one foot was placed solidly on the stone flags of the floor and the other stamped on one end of a hinged board. To the other end were tied the cords from the smaller chimes, and as the board moved up and down they rang together. Merry tinkles and solemn clangs blended and floated out on the soft midnight air.

As he worked Shaliko followed the course of the marching throng, and as the procession, having made a complete circle of the church, came to a halt before the doors, the old man loosed his hold on the bell ropes and signaled to the three boys to do the same. Again the tower was silent, excepting, perhaps, the last faint echoes in the deep throat of the largest bell.

"Christ is arisen from the dead," came the trembling accents of the aged priest, and like an answer the crowd surged and swayed and a hundred tapers twinkled brightly.

"Christ is arisen," shouted the throng.

Each man, turning to his neighbor, embraced him and kissed him three times and repeated: "Christ is arisen."

"Verily is Christ arisen," came the joyous answer.

Hands were waved. Bared heads bowed. Shaliko's heart overflowed with pleasure. He leaned gazing down through the window slit, and in a low voice followed the singing of the choir:

"Eternal life with death was bought."

The crowd hearkened with reverence, and the three boys watched down from above. Dawn was still many hours distant but to them it seemed near, bright, joyous.

"Greetings, my children, greetings! Christ is arisen!" cried the happy old bell ringer.

As each boy answered with "Verily is he arisen" the old man kissed him thrice and gave him a loving pinch for good measure.

"And now, to work again!" shouted Shaliko, clapping his hands. "Come again some other day

and you shall hear of other strange things and places. Perhaps of foreigners or the ships that sail on the ocean. But now to work and finish our task! Swing the big bell. Swing it—Swing . . . Swing . . . Swing!"

IX

Keto Visits Batum

GOGI was loading bundles and carpetbags onto the bullock cart. The patient water buffaloes stood side by side under the heavy wooden yoke, their long black horns thrown back to take the weight of the cart pole. Their blue gray eyes were half closed and they thoughtfully chewed their cuds and swept the buzzing flies away with lazy swishes of their long tails.

Flat on the floor of the cart sat Keto. As Gogi passed up the bundles she stacked them beside her. She was dressed in her best brown woolen dress and over her head and shoulders was thrown her black silk shawl. On her feet that peeped out from under her long skirts were a pair of heel-less brown *toufli* which Uncle Kola had brought her on his last visit from Tiflis. Keto was going on a journey.

"You are a lucky girl," said Gogi, as he handed her the last of the parcels. "You are going to see the sea and the iron road with its puffing engines. If you watch from the window as you come into Batum on the iron road you will see the big ships that come from Ferenzi and from Ameriki. Per-haps, if you are fortunate, you will even hear them blow on their whistles, or dropping their great iron hooks that hold them to the bottom of the sea when they stop at Batum. I saw all these things and more when I visited with the *natlia* on the feast of St. Mary."

"She will see what she will see," said their mother, who had come up as Gogi spoke. "Health to our Keto-heart, for when she returns she will have much work to do. Your father goes to buy the eggs of the silkworms. Silkworms spell work

for little hands, for with baby Morro to watch, I can help but little this year at the silk."

"I shall do it all," said Keto gladly. "I know just how to care for them."

"That," replied Nina, "is because I gave you each year a few worms for your own. You thought it was a game. It was, but it also taught you how to keep the worms. It will be the same now; just a game, but more worms will make it a bigger game."

"I shall get the food for them," promised Gogi, "and we shall play the game together—Keto-heart and I."

"Then you shall go with me to sell the silk when it is ready," said Nina. "You shall go with me to Tiflis."

"Abba!" shouted Vasso, and put an end to plans for the Tiflis trip. "We must go or we shall not reach Natonebi in time for the train. The iron road does not wait for Gurian farmers and their little girls, and I have no wish to spend a night in waiting for it."

"Abba! Tsadi!" cried Vasso to the dozing buffaloes. The big black beasts came to life, and digging their iron-shod feet into the soft earth, moved

off at a leisurely pace, dragging the creaking cart behind them.

"Vasha! Vasha! Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted Gogi.

"A good road to you!" cried Nina. "Do not forget the cheese pie from the *patilia,* Keto-heart! And take care not to crush it, for the *natlia* is very fond of my cheese pies!"

"It is safe in my lap, *deda-heart,"* answered Keto, and she held the paper-wrapped pie aloft in one hand while she waved a farewell with the other.

Vasso whistled shrilly to the buffaloes and now and then he struck a laggard with a green switch that he used to guide the team. Down, down, always down, they traveled from the hills, and before nightfall they came to the little village of Natonebi, that stood at the side of the iron road.

Keto was left with the baggage in the tiny waiting room of the little red brick station while her father went to place his cart and team in the yard of a kinsman who lived in the village.

Vasso soon returned and purchased two tickets at the little barred window of the station agent's office. Keto watched the agent stamp the date

on them with a great bang and wondered that he didn't smash his fingers in the big machine.

A large gong in the corner of the room began to clang. The agent came from his office and, going to the corner of the room, pulled a long iron bar fitted with bright brass rings from a tall red stand. When the bar was out of the rack the agent turned a little crank and the gong rang again.

"The train will soon arrive," said Keto's father. "The gong is a signal from the next station up the line to say that it has left there."

"But what is the iron bar that the man took out?" asked Keto.

"That," said her father, "is a hollow pipe, and when the engine driver gets it from the station agent at a station he knows that no other train can get on the track before him until he reaches the next station. The man here could not get the pipe out if the agent at the next station had not seen that the road was clear and unlocked the rack here in the corner by electricity from his own station far away. The orders for the conductor are put in the hollow of the pipe."

The train puffed into the station and came to

a stop with a shriek of brakes. The station agent emerged from his cubbyhole and struck a large bell that hung on the station platform. The conductor took from the agent the hollow pipe and gave in return the one he had received at the last stop. The agent glanced at his watch and struck the bell twice.

"Hurry," said Vasso to his daughter. "That is the second bell!"

Loaded with knots and bundles, Keto and her father climbed into a little four-wheeled coach and settled themselves on the hard wooden bench in one of its several compartments. Outside, the agent gave three strokes to the bell.

The engine gave a shrill toot of the whistle and the train moved.

For a while the train traveled through deep cuts; the mountains crowded close on the right, and to the left soft rolling hills swallowed up the sinking sun. Before it became quite dark the mountains began to drop farther and farther back and the rolling hills leveled out into the early green of spring wheat and black plowed fields that awaited the first warm day to send up the fresh shoots of the young cotton and brown beans.

Night came and still they had not reached their

destination. "We shall not see the sea," sighed Keto disappointedly. "It is too dark."

"It will not be too dark to see the sea," her father reassured her. "It will be more wonderful than at any other time. You will see it by the moonlight."

With a long blast on the whistle the train rushed into the black mouth of a short tunnel. Keto, frightened by the roaring of the wind and the thundering echoes, clung close to her father's arm.

The train rushed out of the tunnel as quickly as it had entered it, and everything seemed suddenly and strangely still. "Look!" said Vasso. He pointed a finger through the window. "The sea!"

"The sea! The sea!" exclaimed Keto with wonder. Shading her eyes with her two hands from the lantern that hung above their heads, she pressed her nose flat against the window.

They seemed to be racing over the waves, the track was so near the lapping water.

"But it is not black!" said the astonished Keto. "Why is it called the Black Sea? It is silver and all the edge is trimmed with lace."

"It is the moon that makes it silver," explained

her father. "And the lace that you see is made by the waves that shatter themselves on the rocky shore. The Black Sea is not really black; it is a beautiful dark blue. When a storm is brewing, as often happens on this sea, the blue becomes so dark that it appears to be quite black. And that is where it gets its name—the Black Sea."

Keto did not have long to admire the silvery sea. The train roared into the midst of a perfect forest of huge iron tanks. "What are these great round buildings?" inquired Keto, who had not ceased gazing through the window into the murky night.

"Those," said Vasso, "are the reservoirs that store the *nafti* which we burn in our oil lamps. It is brought to Batum all the way through our Caucasus Mountains by great iron pipes, and here it is pumped into the ocean ships that carry it to far places where it is not found."

"Is it found in our mountains?" asked Keto.

"It is found in many places in our land," said Vasso proudly. "Most of it comes from Baku on the Caspian Sea. Hundreds of years before man had learned to use it in lamps and motors it used to bubble up through the cracks in the dry desert earth in those parts, and in many places it burned

and smoked for ages. The ancient people came from thousands of miles to kneel and worship at these Fountains of Fire; they counted them holy and often made human sacrifices on great stone altars, the stones of which still remain. Of this you have read in your book of Arabian Nights."

Vasso arose as he uttered the last words, for the train was drawing into the station of Batum. He lifted the baggage down from the overhead racks, and dividing the burdens with Keto, he led the way out onto the brilliantly lighted platform of the railway station.

"It was a long ride," said Keto, "but I enjoyed it."

"Not so long a ride," said her father, "as when I was a boy. There was no iron road in those days and Batum was four 'journeys' from our home at Ozerget with the fastest oxen."

No sooner had they clambered from their car than they were surrounded by a chattering, scrambling mob of ragged barefoot men with queer three-cornered pillows of woven straw strapped to their backs by loops that encircled their stooping shoulders. Each one tried his best to grab some part of their baggage, while all the time they swore and struck at one another.

Keto was quite frightened, but Vasso laughed loudly and, giving all their parcels to one of the largest, drove the others away with a sharp word and a sweep of his long arm. "Do not be frightened, Keto-heart," said he, still laughing. "That is their queer way. They seem about to cut each other's throats, but they are really the best of friends and comrades."

When the man, who was a Kurd porter, leaned forward, the straw pillow fitted into the small of his back and formed a broad flat surface. He growled something in his own language and several of the others came near and stacked the bundles on his bent back. As Vasso had said, they were not angry at all. They even gave their lucky mate a few joking digs in the ribs as they loaded him and a friendly shove at the back of his bobbing head as he moved off in the wake of Vasso and Keto.

To tired little Keto it seemed that they walked for miles. The hard round cobbles of the stone-paved streets bruised the soles of her feet, which were more accustomed to the naked earth. Her legs ached and throbbed from walking on the level flatness so unlike the hilly slopes of her home. She had almost made up her mind to beg

her father for a short rest when Vasso halted at the iron-shuttered door of one of the tall brick and red stone houses that lined the streets. The Kurd porter also halted and stood, his pile of bundles teetering on his pillowed back. Vasso pulled the bell rope that hung beside the door. A muffled jangle of a bell in the depths of the yard brought footsteps hurrying across the cobbles of the walled courtyard.

"Who is there?" asked a voice beyond the locked door.

"*Tchwenia,* your own," answered Vasso, and with the scrape of drawn bolts the door was opened.

"Victory to thee and thine, Vasso," mumbled the aged Kurd watchman, who recognized the caller. "The master expects thee." And taking a share of the baggage from the porter, the watchman left the remainder for a second trip, and closing the door with a great rattle, he led the guests across the dim square of the silent yard.

They followed the old Kurd through a short passage and, entering a door which he threw open, they saw the *natlia* hastening to meet them.

"With bread and salt, Vasso! With bread and

salt, Keto!" he greeted them. "Welcome to my roof!"

When the men had embraced Keto dropped a stiff little curtsey and the *natlia* kissed her cheek. Nor were these all the greetings. Keto heard a familiar voice at her shoulder: "Health, Keto-heart!"

"You, Vanno?" she exclaimed in surprise.

"I, in truth," smilingly answered the blacksmith's stalwart son.

"What brings you here?" begged the still astonished Keto.

"Have you not heard?" It was Vanno's turn to be surprised. "Your *natlia* has given me work in his station. I am learning to run the great engines that pump the *naft* from the tanks on the shore into the waiting ocean ships."

"And have you seen the ships?" demanded Keto.

"I have seen many ships," declared Vanno proudly. "And to-morrow you shall see them also. The *natlia* has given me a holiday so that I may go with you and show to you the wonders of Batum."

Keto danced with delight.

"But now to bed," warned the *natlia* when she

would have thanked him. "To-morrow will be a long day and you have traveled far."

Here it was Keto remembered the parcel for the *natlia,* and placing it in his hand she again curtsied and said, "Deda sends her greetings and wishes you long life."

The *natlia* lifted the package to his nose. "Mmmmm!" said he, smacking his lips. "Cheese pie! Health to the hands that made it and to those which have brought it! To-morrow you will see nothing half as good."

X

Shops in Batum

"SEE!" Vanno pointed with a finger through the open door of one of the little shacks that leaned one against another on either side of a dark crooked alley near the waterfront of Batum.

The pair paused, and Keto peered into the dimness of the shop. The floor was of dirt; the corners were littered with piles of carved round sticks; the naked rafters of the roof were loaded with stacks of seasoning planks and logs. The three windowless walls were hung thickly with dozens of tiny cradles, some finished, some unpainted,

and still others that waited the addition of rockers or bottoms or the rattling wooden rings.

"The cradle maker!" said Keto.

In the middle of the floor, where the light from the open door fell, a little old man sat hunched on a low stool that stood three or four inches from the floor. Before him a long thin stick was held by the ends on the points of two nails driven into two blocks of wood. As Keto watched, the old man drew a long wooden bow like an archer's across the centered stick. The leather thong of the bow was looped around the stick, and as it was drawn along it caused the stick to whirl rapidly. At the same time the Maker of Cradles touched the whirling stick with a sharp chisel which he held between the toes of his right foot and guided with his right hand.

"My, how the chips fly!" said Keto. In no time the old man had made his singing chisel ride from one end of the stick to the other and, shoving something with his free foot, the blocks fell apart and he held in his hand a delicately carved round all ready to be glued into the frame of a cradle. He cast it onto one of the piles in the corner, and as he placed another stick in his crude lathe he

glanced up to see whose shadow it was that fell across his sunlit floor.

"Greetings," said Keto politely, as she caught his glance, but the old man did not answer with words. He merely nodded gravely and went about his work.

"He does not understand our tongues," explained Vanno. "The makers of cradles and blacksmiths and coppersmiths and fishermen are Greeks and speak only Turkish and their own language."

As Vanno and his charge wound in and out along the winding, narrow streets they passed the clanging shops of the coppersmith and tarried to see the workmen pound and beat the thin sheets of copper into bowls and pots and trays. Sometimes they would stop working for a while on their sharp-pointed anvils and heat the copper sheets until they glowed, and then dip them sputtering and sizzling into a huge earthen jar of cold water before they began to beat them again.

"That is to make the copper soft," said Vanno, in answer to Keto's inquiry. "When copper is pounded it becomes hard and brittle and would

soon split and break if it were not softened in this way."

"Oh! There is a fire," cried Keto. "A shop is burning!" She pointed out to Vanno a door some few paces farther on from which great billows of white smoke were pouring.

"No, no," laughed the smith's son. "Come. You will soon see what causes the smoke."

In the shop was a great forge with a huge bellows slung to the ceiling like that of Vanno's father at Ozerget. A sooty-faced boy was pumping at the fire, over which another sooty workman was bending. In his hand the workman held a red copper bowl which he was heating. As the copper turned black with the heat he threw into the bowl a little pinch of white powder. White, blinding smoke that brought tears to Keto's curious eyes billowed from the bowl and the man, casting into it a piece of something that rang like metal, began to rub the bowl furiously with a handful of shredded bark.

As he rubbed, the bowl, which had been first red, then black, became bright with a shining silver luster. He held it up to the light and gave it several careful dabs before he hung it on a

nail before the door of the dirty, smoke-stained shop.

"He has turned the copper into silver," cried Keto in surprise. But Vanno explained to her that it was only a thin covering of melted tin that the man had put on the copper to keep it easy to clean.

"I see the sea," exclaimed Keto, as she and Vanno came from a last twist of the winding street. "Take me to the sea, Vanno! Take me to the sea! Can we see the ships?"

"Not here," said Vanno. "Only the small fishing boats and the tiny sailing ships from the Turkish coast are anchored at the shore. It is not very deep here and the big ships go farther down where their deep bottoms will not take all the water."

The little boats were anchored row on row along the pebbly shore. The larger ones bobbed up and down with the swell of the water, but the smaller ones had been pulled up high and dry on the beach. From some, barefooted sailors were unloading their catch of fish, and others, already unloaded, were draped with the steaming folds of dirty patched canvas sails that were stretched to dry in the warm sun. Everywhere was the smell of

fish. Great stretches of nets were hung from racks made by tying together three oars, and fishermen were busily knotting and weaving new meshes in them to mend the tears made during the night's fishing. Or perhaps they were adding a few more leaden balls to weight the lower edges and slabs of cork to float the tops.

Women and men in every sort of garb stood haggling with the fish venders or digging with searching fingers among the smelly heaps of fish. Vanno pointed them all out to Keto: Greek women in woolen dresses with aprons belted about them; with their hair in two plaits down their backs, a knitted shawl knotted about their hips, and black kerchiefs about their heads. Turkish women were there, shrouded from head to feet in flowing, dark blue *tchadars* dotted with white.

The most noticeable of all were the Kurdish women in their embroidered wool dresses and silk vests and bright kerchiefs bound to their black heads by wire circlets with dozens of little tinkling gold coins. Some carried babies in big three-cornered scarfs slung at their backs, and each was belted with a broad leather band from which hung long streamers twisted from many-colored yarn,

tipped with tassels that swung to and fro as the wearer padded from table to table seeking alms in the way of rejected pieces of fish.

Along the waterfront came a Persian merchant in heelless slippers, long black satin coat, and tall, brimless black hat. He was followed by a porter carrying the goods which he had, perhaps, bought for his shop somewhere back in the dizzy puzzle of narrow dark streets.

Occasionally a wagon clattered by loaded with crates from one of the ocean boats or piled high with bales of wool or licorice root for some far-away port. All the shops that faced the sea seemed to Keto to be coffeehouses. Groups of men sat at low tables drinking tiny thimble cups of black, sweet Turkish coffee or swallowing huge lumps of gummy *ragat lukum,* Turkish delight. Some played at dominoes or backgammon, slapping the hard palmwood disks down with sharp cracks on the pearl-inlaid boards.

"Is it a feast day," asked Keto, "that everyone seems to be playing at *nardi* or dominoes?"

"No," said her companion, "here in the city people play at games at other times than feast days. Here it is not just a game. While they play at *nardi* they are busy buying and selling. It is in

this way that many merchants of Batum do their business."

"Bashka-ke-le! Bashka-ke-le," shouted a loud voice near by. Keto turned and saw a ragged man who looked very much like the Kurd porters. He did not have the porters' straw pillow, though. Instead, he balanced on his bare head a round wooden platter filled with a heap of red-brown balls.

"What does he shout?" asked Keto.

"He is shouting that he has 'hot heads' for sale," said Vanno. "They are sheep heads which some baker has let him roast in his oven while he was heating it to bake his bread. They are very good to eat."

"Ugh!" shrugged Keto. "That is no food for Gurians. Let those who understand his language eat them."

Vanno chuckled. "He is not shouting in his own language. He is talking in Turkish, for in this town of many peoples and many languages Turkish is the language which everyone understands. It is the language of the bazaar."

"Look out," shouted Keto suddenly, "you will step on the traders' carpets."

Vanno glanced down. The rough cobbles of the

street into which they had turned were covered from side to side with bright Persian carpets and rugs. "He has placed them there to be walked upon," Vanno reassured her. "In the sun and under the feet of passing people their colors, which are too bright when they are first woven, will fade and they will be far more valuable. Besides, foreigners, the *Inglisi* and *Americani,* do not like new rugs, and the rugs will fetch a much greater price when they look older."

"The *Inglisi* have queer customs," agreed Keto as she stepped gingerly across the beautiful carpets, for she was not quite sure that Vanno was right.

Vanno looked up at the sun. "It is time to go home, Keto-heart," said he. "Your father will be waiting at the station. Let us hurry."

"Vai-mi!" mourned Keto sadly. "We have not seen half of all the strange things. *Vai-mi,* that I should have slept so late this morning when I might have been walking with you."

"Do not mind," Vanno comforted her. "Are you not going to Tiflis with *deda*-Nina when she takes the silk to the bazaar? You must save your eyes, too, for the trip home. You can watch the sea from the train."

At Natonebi, Keto and her father left the train and sought the house where Vasso had left the cart and buffaloes. It was dusk; Keto was very tired and spoke little. In her hand she clutched a tiny round cardboard box like a pill box. She was very careful of it. In the box were the eggs for the silkworms—the silkworms that she and Gogi were to care for.

As their creaking cart left the village and crawled along the winding road that led toward the foothills of their mountains they were joined by other travelers who had returned by the same train and were also wending their way home.

Years ago this flat stretch of land, so different from the mountain slopes on which the Gurians made their homes, had seemed to them strange and awful. It was thought to be inhabited by Goblins of the Low Places. Travelers when crossing it always sang to keep themselves from evil. People now were no longer afraid of the goblins, but the singing had become a habit and custom.

Some one of the travelers far ahead began a song in a high piping treble.

"Hidelly, hidelly, hidelly-ho
Delly, ho-delly, ho-delly-ho."

Others joined in the wordless song with variations in bass and tenor. Keto pillowed her tired head on a bundle and dozed. Vasso rode the pole of his jouncing cart and sang with the leader:

"Ho-a, ho-a, Hooooooooo——"

XI

Tending the Silkworms

KETO leaned over a little wooden box. The box was no larger than those in which shoes are bought and it was covered with a sheet of thick paper punctured with dozens of pin pricks. At her side stood Gogi.

"See!" said Keto to her brother. "They are hatching! The worms are coming out of their tiny gray shells!"

Five or six of the very smallest black worms were crawling over the white surface of the paper. As the brother and sister watched, several others poked their weaving black heads through the pin pricks and wriggled out into the light of day.

"Some of the holes are too large," said Gogi.

"There is a worm with a piece of his shell sticking to his back. Unless the holes are small enough to scrape the fragments of shell from the newborn worms, the sharp edges will soon cut into their growing sides and kill them."

Keto moistened a little patch of paper and stuck it over the hole that was too big. "That will fix it," said she. "Can you see another?"

As the worms collected on the top of their nest Keto carefully swept them off with a large turkey feather onto other pieces of paper that each held a few tender mulberry leaves.

"Have you enough leaves?" asked Gogi, who had promised to gather the feed for the worms.

"More than enough," answered Keto. "They are far too tiny to eat much yet. Wait a week and they will keep you busy."

Keto was right. About forty thousand worms came from the little box that Vasso bought in Batum from a Greek trader. The first week they ate but six pounds or so of their mulberry-leaf diet, and then they fell asleep.

"Sh!" warned Keto, as Gogi came into the room where the silkworms lay. "They are asleep. Do not bring any more leaves, for they will not be fresh when the worms awake. When they shed

their skins and come to life they must have plenty of food, but it must be fresh and juicy."

Gogi threw the leaves out of the open window and said: "Father and I have finished the racks. Shall I bring them in?"

"Bring them now," said his sister. "The worms have grown larger and will not fall through the cracks now. They need more room, too."

Gogi brought the racks which he and Vasso had prepared for the worms to fed upon. They looked like miniature rafts made of cornstalks tied together with split osier fibers.

"Look," said Keto, as she and Gogi transferred the awakened worms. "They are much larger. The humps are beginning to grow on their backs and the sharp black spikes in their tails are longer."

"They are turning from black to gray," said Gogi, as he carefully picked up a handful of mulberry leaves covered with greedy gnawing worms and placed it on a new rack.

"They will be even grayer when they change this skin and get their third one," said Keto. "The bigger they get the grayer they become and the more they eat."

"Eat, my little ones, eat," urged Keto, and the

worms ate greedily. They grew and grew. During the next three weeks the forty thousand worms that were hatched from a tiny pinch of eggs ate over half a ton of leaves. Three times more they slept and changed their skins, and their racks at the end of the month filled the whole sunny south room from floor to ceiling. For as they grew more racks were added to give them space and a place big enough to hold the heaps of leaves that they devoured.

The first week they had eaten but a handful of food, but before they had lived a full month the entire family was busy gathering leafy branches from the mulberry trees to feed them. Throughout the whole day Nina and Keto and Vasso and Gogi labored to feed their greedy mouths and clear away the rubbish and occasional dead worms that fell through the cracks in the cornstalk frames. Even baby Morro seemed to understand that it was very important, for she would lie hour after hour watching the others at their work. She loved, too, to be given a green branch from the sheaves of worm feed, from which she could tear the soft leaves one by one and strew them about her crib.

The thousands of gnawing jaws filled the room

with a continued rustle like the wind through tree tops. Piles of leaves disappeared like wisps of straw in a fire. Toward the end of the month Vasso arose several times during the night to feed the troublesome creatures.

"They have stopped eating!" announced Keto one day when all were completely tired out with caring for the hungry worms. "See! They are about to begin spinning their cocoons!"

The family gathered about one of the lower racks and watched the worms on it. A few still continued to eat, but most of them stood in one spot and waved their heads about in the air as though they were smelling the wind. On the leafless twigs could be seen here and there a thin, shining floss. The silk was ready for spinning.

"It is good," said Gogi with relief, "that they do not grow as large as snakes or all the forest would not hold enough to feed them."

"Do not think that the work is all done," warned his sister. "We must watch closely now or they will spin their cocoons so near to one another that they will stick together and be ruined. We must take good care that each worm has all the room he needs."

In a few days every worm had disappeared,

wrapped in a bright cocoon that he had woven about himself. When Nina was certain that every worm had finished his cocoon she called Keto and Gogi and together they collected all the little silky bags and emptied them into a huge pot of hot water. This was to kill the worm inside before it had time to turn into a moth and ruin the cocoon by bursting through its silken walls.

Then came days of work—the unraveling of the almost invisible web from the cocoons and twisting four or five together to make thread. When the thread was twisted from the floss it was rewound on a distaff and spun again. This time, as the long wooden top spun by a twist of Nina's strong fingers twisted the thread tighter and tighter, it was scraped up and down with a V-shaped piece of bamboo which shaved all the tiny knots and lumps from the floss. These lumps and knots were really blobs of the glue that held the double thread of the cocoon together, for a silkworm spins two threads at once and sticks them side by side to form a flat, tapelike thread.

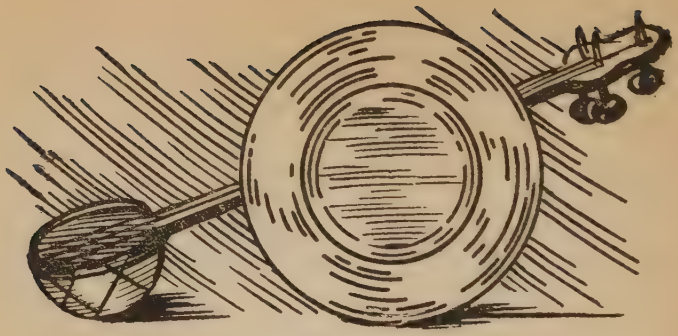
"We are being rewarded for our hard work," said Nina, pointing to the fat skeins of golden silk that hung on the wall. "We shall have twice as much this year."

"It was all my fault last year," said Gogi contritely. "If I had but watched a little closer the ants would not have eaten up the young worms as they slept."

"Not altogether your fault," his mother consoled him. "Father Vasso picked too many leaves from the mulberry trees that bear fruit. The leaves of those which do not bear fruit are not so sweet and do not, therefore, attract the ants."

"This year," boasted Keto, "I took good care that the ants were helpless. I did as Granny told me—I put little rings of red pepper dust around all the poles that hold the racks. The wicked ants could not pass through the hot red pepper to get the sleeping worms."

"You have both been a great help," agreed her mother. "And you shall both have the reward which I promised. You shall go with me to Tiflis when the silk is taken to the bazaar."



XII

The Tale of Ashik-Kerib

UNCLE KOLA sat with his wool-stockinged feet thrust almost into the glowing embers of the open fire on the floor of the little log kitchen down by the brook and thrummed the strings of his guitar. He had just finished the singing of a song.

"Long life to thee, Kola, and thanks," said Vasso, who had followed the singing closely from beginning to end.

Keto and Gogi, who had also listened intently, thanked him and Gogi asked, "How is this song called, Uncle Kola?"

"It is called," replied Uncle Kola, "the song of Ashik-Kerib. It is a song well known and much

loved in Tiflis, for in Tiflis live many of our people who are Moslems and Ashik-Kerib was a Moslem."

"Who was Ashik-Kerib?" asked Keto.

"Ashik-Kerib was a poor man who became rich and a sad man who was made happy," explained Uncle Kola. "It is a long story which I learned from the Tellers of Tales in the coffeehouses and on the bazaars of Tiflis."

"Please tell us the tale of Ashik-Kerib," begged Keto.

"Oh, please do, Uncle Kola!" Gogi added his plea.

"*Khargi!* It is well!" agreed Uncle Kola. "But it is a long tale. Take care that you do not fall asleep before it is finished."

Uncle Kola tore a small square of paper from a large sheet which he carried in the pocket of his tunic and rolled a long, funnel-shaped cigarette from a pinch of Vasso's strong tobacco. To the accompaniment of soft chords on his guitar, Uncle Kola told the tale of Ashik-Kerib, pausing now and then to puff at the cigarette, which he allowed to hang on his lower lip and waggle up and down as he talked or sang.

The Tale of Ashik-Kerib

In the ancient city of Tiflis, many, many years ago, there lived a wealthy Moslem. Allah had endowed him with much gold, but dearer to him than all his gold was his one daughter, Magul-Mageri. The stars in the heavens are beautiful, but beyond the stars are the angels. And as the angels are more beautiful than the stars, so was Magul-Mageri more beautiful than all the other maidens of Tiflis. In Tiflis there also lived a poor youth called Ashik-Kerib. The Prophet had given him nothing but a good heart and the gift of song. Playing on the sweet strings of his *saaza* and singing the praises of the ancient heroes of his native land, he wandered about wherever there was a wedding or feast and assisted the rich and fortunate in making merry. He first saw Magul-Mageri at one of these feasts, and they fell deeply in love with one another at first sight. But as poor Ashik-Kerib had little hope of ever winning her hand he became sad as the winter skies.

One day, as Ashik-Kerib lay sleeping in the shade of a vineyard, Magul-Mageri passed in the company of some of her maidens, and one of them saw the slumbering *ashik* (Ashik means min-

strel). The friend fell behind the other girls and, addressing the sleeper, sang: "Why do you doze, foolish one, in the shade of the vineyard? Your gazelle is passing by!" Ashik-Kerib awoke and the girl darted away like a swift bird. Magul-Mageri heard the song and began to upbraid her friend.

"If you only knew to whom I sang," answered the girl, "you would not be angry with me. It was your own Ashik-Kerib."

"Take me to him!" demanded her mistress, and when she saw the sorrowful face of Ashik-Kerib Magul-Mageri began to comfort him.

"How shall I not sorrow," said he, "when I love you so much and know that you can never be my wife?"

"Ask my hand of my father," said she. "He will celebrate our wedding with his own money and will give me a dowry that will be enough to keep us in comfort the remainder of our lives."

"No, dear Magul-Mageri," refused Ashik-Kerib, "I shall not do that. But I shall make a vow. I shall wander over the earth for seven years, and by the end of that time I shall either have wealth or I shall be dead. If you are pleased

with this plan we will be married at the end of the seven years if I return."

Poor Magul-Mageri could do nothing but agree, but she added that if he did not return at the end of seven years she would become the wife of Kurshud-Bey who had also loved her for many years.

Ashik-Kerib received his mother's blessing and, kissing his little sister, he slung his pack over one shoulder and left the city of Tiflis with the staff of a traveler in his hand. Before he had gone far he was overtaken by a galloping horseman who greeted him. It was Kurshud-Bey.

"A fair journey," said he. "Whither you wander, traveler, I am your friend!"

Ashik was little pleased with his friend but there was nothing that he could do. Long they traveled together until they came to a deep river that had neither bridge nor ford. "Swim ahead," said the Bey to Ashik, "and I shall follow behind on my horse."

Ashik took off his outer garments and swam across the water. As he stepped onto the farther shore he turned to see how his companion fared. Oh, woe! Oh, Mighty Allah! The wicked Bey had stolen his clothing and was well on his way back

to Tiflis. Naught was to be seen but a long snaky cloud of dust that showed the path he had taken across the sandy desert.

When he returned to Tiflis the wicked Bey went to the aged mother of Ashik-Kerib and showed her the clothing of her son. "Your son drowned in the raging river," said he, "and I have brought you his garments."

The sorrowing mother fell weeping on the clothes of her lost child and when her grief was a little less she took them to Magul-Mageri and, showing them to the rich Moslem's daughter, said, "My son is dead; you are free from your promise. See! Kurshud-Bey has brought back his garments."

But Magul-Mageri only smiled and shook her beautiful head. "Do not believe him," she said. "It is only some trick of wicked Kurshud-Bey. Until the seven years have passed no man shall be my husband." And taking down her silver-stringed *saaza* from the wall she began to play upon it and to sing the favorite song of her beloved Ashik-Kerib.

Meanwhile the traveler, barefooted and naked, had come to a little village. The kind inhabitants fed and clothed him, and he sang wonderful songs

to them in return. In this manner he wandered from village to village and from city to city until his fame was carried all about. At last he came to the city of Kalif. As was his custom he went into a coffeehouse and, asking for a *saaza,* he sat down and began to play.

The ruler of Kalif at that time was a great lover of music and singing. Many minstrels were brought to him by his men, but none of them pleased him. His agents were exhausted with running about the city seeking for singers, but it so happened that they passed the coffeehouse where Ashik was resting and heard his wonderful voice.

"Come with us," said they, "to the pasha, or you shall lose your head."

"I am a free man," Ashik answered them. "I come from the city of Tiflis and I go whither I desire. I sing only as I wish and your pasha is no master of mine."

The pasha's agents would not listen to him and despite his protests they bound him and dragged him before their ruler.

"Sing!" commanded the pasha.

Poor Ashik-Kerib sang, and in his song he told of his love for the beautiful Magul-Mageri.

His singing so pleased the pasha that the great man besought him to remain with him in Kalif.

The pasha made him rich gifts of fine clothing and money. Ashik began to live happily and became very rich. Whether he forgot his beloved Magul-Mageri or not it is hard to say, but the last year of the seven drew swiftly to an end, and he still made no preparations for returning to Tiflis.

The beautiful Magul-Mageri became very sad as the time passed and there was no sign of her lover. She went to a merchant who was about to leave Tiflis with his caravan of goods and a band of slaves and, giving him a silver plate, said, "In every city to which you come place this plate among your goods so that it may be easily seen and send out criers to say that any man who is able to prove that the plate is his may have it and likewise its weight in pure gold."

The trader set out and in every city and village to which he came he did as Magul-Mageri had ordered him. He had sold almost all of his goods and the last city to which he came was Kalif. Here, as in other cities, he sent criers out to tell of the silver plate and Ashik-Kerib, hearing their shouts on the streets, rushed to the place where the trader

had halted his caravan and, clutching the plate in his arms, shouted, "It is mine!"

"Surely it is thine," said the trader, who had immediately recognized him as Ashik-Kerib. "But Magul-Mageri bade me tell thee that the seven years are drawing swiftly to their end and that if you do not hasten back to Tiflis before the last day she will become the bride of another."

Poor Ashik tore his beard with despair; only three days remained to make the long trip to Tiflis. He leaped on his horse, however, and taking with him a huge sack of gold, sped away on the homeward journey. He did not spare his horse and at last, as he galloped along the slopes of the mountain of Arzinian, the poor beast fell dead. How now could Ashik travel? It was a two-months journey from Arzinian to Tiflis, and to him there was left but two days.

Ashik prayed to Almighty Allah, "Help me, O Allah, for there is no power on earth that can!"

As he spoke, a man mounted on a snow-white horse appeared at his side. "What do you wish, young man?" he inquired.

"I wish to die, only," wept the disheartened Ashik

"I wish to reach Ezeroum before nightfall," said Ashik.

"I can soon arrange that matter for you," said the horseman. "Follow me."

"How may I follow thee?" wept Ashik. "I am weighted down with this sack and you are on your horse, which is as swift as the wind."

"True!" agreed the man. "Hang your sack on the back of my saddle and follow me."

Ashik-Kerib ran as fast as he was able, but he could not keep apace with the horseman.

"Why do you fall behind?" shouted the stranger, angrily.

"How shall I not fall behind?" wept Ashik. "I am very tired and you are on your horse which is as swift as a thought."

"True," agreed the man. "Climb onto the saddle behind me and tell me truly where you wish to go."

"I wish to reach Erzeroum before nightfall," said Ashik.

"Close your eyes," commanded the man, and in another moment, "open them!"

Ashik looked about him. They were in Erzeroum! "Pardon me, master," he cried. "I was mistaken. I wish to be in Kars."

"Did I not warn you to tell me the truth?" said the stranger with an angry shake of his white-

turbaned head. "Close your eyes again. Now, open them!"

The second time when Ashlik opened his eyes he saw all about him the tall spires of Kars. He could scarcely believe that it was true. He fell on his face before the stranger and wept, "Pardon, master! I am thrice guilty! You know, yourself, that if a man starts the day with a lie he must lie the whole day through. It was to Tiflis that your servant wished to go."

"Shame, faithless one!" cried the man. "Close your eyes once more. And open them!"

Ashik leaped with joy. He stood at the gates of Tiflis. "Your servant thanks you!" said he to the white-turbaned horseman. "But grant me, I pray, one more wish. It is a two-months journey from Arzinian to Tiflis; no man will believe me when I say that I came in one day. Give me some proof of this miracle."

"Stoop," said the man, "and take from the hoof of my horse a clod of dirt. If your words are not believed demand that a person be brought to you which has been blind for seven years. Rub his blind eyes with the dirt and he shall see."

Ashik stooped and took a clod of dirt, and when he arose the man and his white horse were

nowhere to be seen. He knew then that the strange horseman was no other than White Georgi whom the Moslems call Khaderiliaz!

It was late evening before Ashik found his almost-forgotten home. He knocked at the closed door with a hand that shook and cried, *"Deda! Deda!* Mother! Mother! Open your door! I am a traveler, the Lord's guest! Open in the name of your absent son!"

A feeble voice answered him, "The houses of the rich and mighty are open to the traveler. In the city there is a marriage feast; there you will be welcomed and may pass the night in merriment."

"I have no friends in this city, *Deda,"* continued Ashik. "I repeat my prayer; for the sake of your absent son, take me in!"

Then spoke his sister, "I shall arise and open the door to him."

"You are a naughty girl," cried the old woman. "You are only too glad to welcome young men, for you know that it is now seven years that I have been blind with weeping for my lost son."

The daughter did not heed her mother, however, and, giving the stranger the usual greetings, stood watching him with a strange feeling in her

breast. Ashik returned her greetings and, seating himself, gazed about the familiar room. On the wall, wrapped in its dusty cover, hung his *saaza* —his sweet-toned *saaza,* and turning to his mother he asked, "What is this that hangs on your wall?"

"You are a curious guest," replied the old woman. "Is it not enough that we give you a piece of bread and a place to rest your tired head and Godspeed on the morrow?"

"I have already called you my mother and this maid is my sister," continued Ashik. "And now I ask what this is that hangs on your wall."

"It is a *saaza*—a *saaza,*" answered the aged woman angrily, for she did not believe him. "It is a *saaza* upon which those who can make music."

Ashik begged that his sister be allowed to take the instrument down and show it to him, but the old lady refused to permit it. "Never!" she said stubbornly. "That is the *saaza* of my unfortunate son. Seven years it has hung on that wall and no living hand shall ever touch its strings."

Again his sister disobeyed her mother, and taking down the dusty *saaza,* handed it to Ashik.

"Almighty Allah," said he as he took it, "if my wish is to come true let these seven silver

strings be tuned as they were when last I hung this *saaza* on yonder wall!"

He struck the long-silent strings and they answered in perfect harmony. He sang, "I am but a poor *karib,* a wanderer, but mighty White Georgi gave me his aid and though I am poor and my song is poor I am thy own lost son, my mother!"

His mother broke into tears and asked, "How are you called, son?"

"I am called," said Ashik, "Reshid, the Simple-souled."

"You have broken my heart with your song, Reshid," said the old woman. "Last night I dreamed that I saw the hair of my old head white as snow, but it is now seven years since I wept my sight away for my lost son. Tell me, you who have his voice, when shall my son return?"

Twice she repeated the questions with tears in her blind eyes, but she would not believe Ashik when he declared that he was her long-lost son. "Let me take the *saaza, Deda*-heart," begged he. "I shall visit the marriage feast which is near by and sing to them. All the money which falls to my share I shall give to you."

At first the old woman would not hear of the

saaza being taken from beneath her roof, but when he promised to give her all his baggage if he harmed but one string of the precious instrument she consented. She had felt the heavy sack and knew it to be filled with gold.

His sister accompanied him to the feast and stood at the open door to see what would happen. It was the house of Magul-Mageri and on this night she was to become the bride of Kurshud-Bey. Magul-Mageri sat in a corner with her maidens. She was wrapped from head to foot in a rich *chadra,* and under its folds she held in one hand a sharp knife and in the other a cup of poison. She had resolved that she would rather die than become the bride of anyone other than her beloved Ashik.

"Welcome, singer!" said Kurshud-Bey to Ashik when he saw him standing with his *saaza* beneath his arm. "Welcome, for we are feasting. Play a tune and sing a song and I shall give you a handful of silver."

When the Bey asked his name Ashik answered, "*Tchkorra-vitsis,* that is, Soon-to-be-known."

"That is a queer name," laughed the merry Bey. "I have never heard its like before. But a name is a name—play and sing to us!"

Ashik struck a chord and sang, "I drank sweet wine in the city of Kalif, but Allah gave me wings and I flew to Tiflis in three days."

Kurshud-Bey had a brother who was a little foolish, and when he heard these words he leaped to his feet and, drawing his sword, would have cut off the singer's head, saying, "Why do you tell us falsehoods—that you flew from Kalif in three days?"

"Why would you kill me?" asked Ashik. "Singers gather from all places and sing their songs as they know them. Believe me or not, as you will."

"Let him sing," said the groom, and Ashik continued.

"I made my morning prayers in the valley of the Arzinian; at noon I bowed down in Ezeroum; at sunset I prayed in Kars, and with the fall of night in Tiflis, Allah gave me wings, and I flew hither. I give thanks that I did not fall beneath the flying hoofs of the swift white horse, for he leaped from hill to vale and from vale to hill like those who dance on swinging ropes. Allah gave wings to the poor singer and he flew to the feast of the lovely Magul-Mageri!"

When Magul-Mageri knew his voice she rejoiced and cast the sharp knife on one side and

the glass of poison on the other. "You are about to break your vow," said her maidens when they saw that she no longer held death in her hands. "To-night you will become the bride of Kurshud-Bey!"

"Can you not hear?" replied Magul-Mageri happily. "It is the voice of my own Ashik-Kerib!" And taking a pair of scissors, she snipped the thick veil that covered her fair face.

When her eyes were no longer shaded she saw Ashik-Kerib standing in the middle of the room, and throwing themselves into each other's arms they fainted with joy.

Again Kurshud-Bey's brother rushed forward with drawn sword, and again his arm was stayed. "Peace!" said Kurshud. "What is written on a man's forehead when he is born shall surely come to pass."

When Magul-Mageri was revived she blushed with shame and hid her face in the tatters of her torn *tchadra.*

"Now," said Kurshud-Bey to Ashik-Kerib, "I plainly see who you are. But tell us, pray, how you came such a great distance in such a short time."

"For proof," answered Ashik, "I shall split

a great stone with my steel sword, and if I tell a falsehood—then may my neck become thinner than a hair from your head! But, best of all, bring to me one who has been blind these seven years and I shall return to them their sight."

Ashik's sister, who had seen all and heard all, ran quickly to their old mother and shouted, "*Deda, Deda,* surely this is your lost son and my brother!" And taking the old woman by the hand she led her to the feast.

"Know all people the might of White Georgi!" said Ashik, and taking the lump of dirt from his sleeve he rubbed the blind eyes of his aged mother. The old woman's sight was returned to her and no one dared to doubt the truth of what Ashik had said. Kurshud-Bey gave up the beautiful Magul-Mageri without a word, to her true lover.

Ashik-Kerib was so happy that he bore nobody a grudge, and taking his sister's hand, he placed it in the palm of Kurshud-Bey. "Let my sister comfort you for your loss, Kurshud-Bey," said he. "She is no less lovely than my own beautiful sweetheart, and with the great dower which I shall give her you will be as happy as I shall be with my beloved Magul-Mageri."

XIII

To Mengralia

BBBbbbbbbb!" cried Vasso, and his sleepy black buffaloes that drew his creaking wooden-wheeled cart came to a willing halt. A group of black-gowned, black-kerchiefed women had stepped from a break in the green bay hedge that lined the road and stood in the path of his team.

"Vai-me, deda! Vai-me! A good wife she was! And a good mother!" they moaned and wept. They tore their black hair that hung down in

disorder from beneath their black kerchiefs. The faces of some bore scarlet welts where they had scratched them with their sharp nails and they all waved their arms and mourned as with one voice.

Vasso descended from the cart, placed a stick under the heavy pole to lift it from the buffaloes' necks, and beckoning to Gogi stepped out after the weeping women.

"Why do they weep so?" asked Gogi, as he caught up with his father. "Do you know them, or do they know you?"

"No," replied Vasso to his son. "I do not know them; nor do they know me, but someone in the household has died."

"But why do they call us mama-heart?" wondered Gogi. "Have we not come hither to buy a horse? But a moment since you spoke of need to make haste on the road."

"This is Mengralia, Gogi-heart," answered his father. "These people are Karthli, as are we, but their ways differ from ours as does their tongue. When a house is in mourning all who pass on the road must halt and visit with the afflicted."

"Is it right that the women of a sad house

should stand at their gate and summon strangers to their table?" asked Gogi.

"These women are not of the sad house, Gogi," explained Vasso. "They are women that are hired for a sum of money to gather at sad houses and weep for the death of a person. They are paid by the master of the house at which they gather."

"What a strange thing!" said Gogi.

"It is not so strange when you know the reason," continued Vasso. "Since it is their custom to call every stranger that passes their gate, they must always keep a full table of food. It would be still stranger if a guest were called to an empty table. The women of a sad house in this country of Mengralia are busy in the kitchen, for they have no time to weep. A good housewife must always get the food for her guests with her own hands. That is real bread and salt."

Vasso and Gogi followed the black mourners through a little grove of trees and came out into an open place in front of the house. In the open place stood a long rough table, and about the table sat or stood a fair company of men and women.

"Bread and salt, brothers," greeted them a tall, gray-bearded man who appeared to be the Head

of the Table. For at funerals as well as feasts there must be a Head of the Table.

"I weep with the master of this house," replied Vasso, as the tall man guided them to a place at the table. Food was pressed on them by the women and for a while father and son ate in silence.

When they had disposed of a good share of the good food on the table the tall man, who was, in fact, the Head of the Table, arose and filled a long black bullock's horn with wine from a long-necked earthen *koki* which stood on the ground at his side. This he passed to Vasso, and filled another for Gogi and a third for himself.

The tall man took a fragment of bread, and dipping it into the wine of his horn, laid it carefully on the table before him. "The good mistress of this house bids you live long," said he.

By these words Vasso knew that the mistress of the house had died. Likewise dipping a piece of bread in his wine, he placed it on the table boards before him, and raising the horn to drink, he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven be unto this dead mistress and long life to the living of this house!"

The words were spoken in the language of Mengralia, which Gogi could not understand, but

dipping the bread in the wine was something that was done in Guria. He, too, dipped his bread in his wine, took a sip from his horn, and said in his own tongue, "Heavenly Kingdom to the dead and long life to the living!"

Vasso would have left when they had finished this toast, but the Head of the Table urged them to stay for a little while, saying that the priest would surely soon come and the funeral be brought to an end. They had scarcely resumed their seats when the loud cries and moans of the women at the gate made it known that someone else had arrived.

"Perhaps this is the priest," whispered Vasso to his son, for he was impatient to be on his way, but feared to offend the master of the sad house.

The priest came, accompanied by the mourning women in black. He blessed the people standing in the yard as he passed among them and went into the house. Through the open windows could be heard his droning voice as he read a last prayer. Several young people came out of the house and took the coffin lid which leaned against the doorpost—a sign that death had visited that house.

All the flowers which had been brought by sorrowing friends were piled onto the lid and the

young people moved with them toward the gate. Six grown men emerged from the house bearing the open coffin. Three long white linen towels had been passed under the casket, and supporting it by holding the ends of these towels, the men carried it through the door, down the steps, and across the yard in the path of the flowers.

The priest took a place at the head of the procession, swinging a smoking censer and chanting a prayer from a book which he held in his right hand. At his side walked a deacon carrying a tall candle and now and then joining the priest in his singsong prayer. Behind the coffin came the master of the house, the dead woman's husband, surrounded by the hired mourners, weeping louder than ever now. The dead woman slept in her open casket. Her pale hands were folded over her breast, and between her fingers a cross had been placed. The cross was made of two wax tapers which had been heated and stuck together at the middle.

Vasso and Gogi, among others, did not follow in the procession, but stood on one side, heads bared, bowing and making the sign of the cross as it passed before them.

A woman came from the house, and seeing that

Vasso and the others were not following to the graveyard, she hastened to bring forward a big dish heaped with cold boiled rice and dotted with tiny bits of colored candies. This was the Dish of Remembrance, and everyone took a pinch of rice and a piece of candy before leaving. Each, as he took his portion, made the sign of the cross and murmured, "Kingdom of Heaven to the dead!"

When all had eaten a bit the woman brought a *koki* of water and gave them, one by one, to wash their hands as is the custom at the end of a funeral.

Gogi and his father washed their fingers as did all the others, and when this duty was done they bowed to the woman who had ministered to them and with a whispered farewell hastened to their waiting cart and departed.

"We have lost a day," said Vasso sadly, as he and Gogi rode on. "A man cannot buy a horse by candlelight. A horse is not a sack of onions and it will be dark before we reach the trader's house."

Gogi was not very sorry that they were forced to spend a night in Mengralia. He hoped to see other strange things, but he nodded his head.

XIV

A Horse Trade and a Wedding

TO GOGI the land of Mengralia seemed very flat and ugly. True, the trees were tall and stately; they were too tall and stately. They sprang straight up from the level soil to a great height as though they did not care to associate with other things of the earth. Not so the mountain trees of Gogi's home; their bent bodies seemed to turn ever back toward the earth as though loath to lose its company. Even their knotty, gnarled arms

grew out from just above the roots to shelter little birds and make steps for those who liked to climb into the swaying tops to swing with the wind. If any birds were nested in the Mengralian trees they were so high in the air that their songs were lost before they reached the ears of travelers on the road below.

Gogi turned about in the cart on which he rode and looked back toward the mountains that were his home. The lowland mists and the dusk of the evening made them appear to be a long way off. He wondered what Nina and Keto were doing; and baby Morro. Father Vasso trudged along at the heads of the two buffaloes hitched to the creaking cart, but Gogi felt sad and lonesome and far from home. He tried a song, but his voice sounded squeaky and weak in the open country; there were no mountains or hollows to send the echoes ringing back.

"Truly," thought Gogi, "this is an empty place and unfit to be lived in. Not even a thicket to hide a pig!"

It was late twilight when Vasso clucked to his buffaloes, touched the off one with his switch, and guided the grunting, complaining fellows off the main road onto a long straight path bor-

dered with tall trees. At the far end of the path, some distance from the highway, stood a house. It was unlike the houses of Guria; it was broad and squat and sat flat on the level ground.

"Surely this is a topsy-turvy country," thought Gogi. "The trees are tall and the houses are low. The people must be as unfriendly as their trees, for they have built their homes as far away from the road as they possibly could."

Buffaloes do not like strange places, and Vasso was forced to give his pair an occasional cut with the switch, accompanied with a sharp word of command, to drive them toward the house.

His shouts must have been heard in the house, for a man emerged to meet them and stood before his door. As Vasso halted his team the man bowed and greeted the travelers in his own language, which Vasso understood. A lad about the same age as Gogi came from around the corner and took the lead rein from Gogi's father.

"He will bed down our beasts," Vasso told Gogi. "Go with him and give him your help. He is the master's son and his father calls him Choo-choo!"

Gogi was pleased to discover that Choo-choo

could speak the language of the Karthli. "How did you learn our speech?" he asked of him.

"My father keeps a store in Senaki," the boy replied. "We have many customers from among the Gurians who live near to our borders."

"Do you sell things in the store?" inquired Gogi.

"I sometimes sell such things as eggs and cheeses," answered Choo-choo, "but if there is bartering to be done then I call my father."

"Then you are a real trader," said Gogi in awed surprise.

"We Mengralians are all traders," the boy replied with a smile, for he was amused that anyone should think it pleasant to be a trader. "If we do not trade in the stores we trade horses and cattle. There is no place in all Georgia for such fine cattle."

"That I know," said Gogi. "We have come all the way from Ozerget to buy a horse of your father."

"And there are no better horses in all Mengralia than my father's," said Choo-choo proudly. "Prince Bagration, himself, has bought of him."

While the boys talked they were unyoking the buffaloes and propping the pole of the wooden

cart. Gogi could see no cornstalks among the litter on the stable floor. He picked up a strand of the straw from the bedding and examined it. It was almost as thin as grass, and here and there on it were a few tiny round seeds. It was millet, a seed that was little known to Gogi.

"That is straw from the *gormi,*" explained Choo-choo. "You will have some for your supper. We grow no corn in Mengralia and so can bake no *tchadi* from corn meal as you of Guria do. We make a mush of the *gormi* and sometimes my father brings a little bread from the store when it becomes too stale to sell."

"I have seen the grain of the *gormi* at home," said Gogi, "but I did not know that people ate it. With us it is fed to little chickens and not birds."

"It is very good food," asserted Choo-choo, afraid that Gogi would look down on the Mengralians because of their eating chicken feed. "But it must be boiled in the right way. The pot must be of thick iron and the fire not too hot. The most important thing is to beat the *gormi* well with a stout stick all the while it is cooking. Only then will it be soft and stick together so that you can pick it up in your fingers without its crumbling to pieces and falling onto the table."

Gogi still thought it strange food for men, but he said no more about it, fearing to hurt Choo-choo's feelings. He decided to talk of something else.

"Your name, Choo-choo, would seem strange to mountain ears," he said.

Choo-choo laughed. "That is not my real name," he added. "My real name is the same as yours—Gogi."

"But why are you called Choo-choo?" asked the wondering Gogi.

"In Mengralia," explained Choo-choo, "every baby is given some easy name as soon as it is born—names like Choo-choo, Zu-zu, Bo-bo, or anything that their mother or father might think nice. Later, when the baby is baptized, he is given his real name after some good saint. When I go to the church to take communion the priest always calls me Gogi. At home I am Choo-choo, and I like Choo-choo better."

"I like it, too," said Gogi. "It is so easy to remember."

That night Gogi and Vasso ate with their Mengralian host. The *gormi* was as good as Choo-choo had promised and it went well with a dish of red beans hot with red pepper that set in the center

of the table. Gogi dug deep with his fingers into his pile of steaming *gormi,* pulled out a hot chunk and, dipping it into the bowl of beans, ate it with great relish.

From across the table Choo-choo smiled and winked and, touching his pursed lips with a thumb and two fingers, made a soft kissing noise. Gogi understood that this was his way of saying "How good!"

When supper was finished Choo-choo led Gogi to another room and they sat together on Choo-choo's *takhta* and talked until both felt sleepy. Soon they were both lying asleep on the same *takhta* and covered by one felt coverlet. In the other room Vasso and the host smoked and talked of the sale to be made in the morning.

When Gogi awoke the sun was shining into the room and he was alone on the *takhta.* Choo-choo was up and gone, but he had not called his guest. Gogi was not sorry until he raised himself on one arm and looked through the window out into the yard. He had overslept the horse trade! Even as he watched he saw his father holding the reins of two fine horses in his two hands. Gogi knew that his choice lay between these two. One was a chestnut and the other was coal black.

"What a beautiful black!" thought Gogi. "How well Father-heart's red saddle pad would look against his black sides!"

Vasso's thoughts must have been the same, for he retained the black horse's rein in his hand and turned the other's over to the owner.

"Vasha!" shouted Gogi. "He has bought the black!"

Vasso heard his son's shout and glanced toward the window. He saw Gogi's shining face and cried, "Shame on you! You have been sleeping peacefully and left me all alone with a Mengralian horse trader. I am sure that I have been sadly cheated."

Gogi was sure that his father had not made a bad deal, and in a trice he was out of bed and ran out to get a closer look at their new property. The black seemed even finer and blacker on closer inspection.

"What is he called, Father-heart?" questioned Gogi.

"Kara-Yussuf," answered Vasso.

"That is not a name of the Karthli," complained Gogi. "What does it mean in our tongue?"

"In our language his name would be Black Joe," replied Vasso. "He found his strange name

on the other side of the river where the Abkhazi live and where he was born."

Gogi knew that the Abkhazi were fine horsemen and Moslems, so he understood the animal's queer name and felt certain that his father had bought a good horse. Gogi wanted to call him Shavi, which in the Georgian language means Black, but his father shook his head in objection.

"It is not good to change a horse's name," he said. "It might make him stumble some day."

Gogi was ready to believe as his father did and decided that he must learn to like the horse's old name.

Gogi had wondered the day before at the long-skirted coats, or *tcherkeskas,* that Choo-choo and his father wore. He had thought to himself that such a trailing thing hanging around his ankles would soon cost him a broken head on the mountain paths if it were not torn to tatters on the brambles and thorns of the hillsides. Now he saw why the Mengralians loved such clothes. Choo-choo had climbed onto the horse which had been Vasso's second choice—the chestnut—and was racing around the yard at a mad canter. The horse's strides were wonderful and the long tails of Choo-choo's *tcherkeska* flew out in the wind

behind and flapped gracefully as he swung with the throw of his mount.

"We shall go a part of the way with you and your father," Choo-choo told Gogi. "A kinsman of ours is giving his daughter in marriage and my father and I are going to the ceremony."

"Are you riding or walking?" asked Gogi.

"Mengralians always ride ahorse to marriage feasts," replied Choo-choo proudly. "Our kinsman would be shamed by us if we arrived on foot."

Vasso took his high black saddle and red felt saddle pad from the cart and cinched them on his newly purchased horse. Gogi yoked the sleepy buffaloes, Choo-choo's father appeared on a third horse, and the little company headed for the road.

The horse trader led the way and, knowing the ins and outs of the countryside as he did, they made many short cuts on the homeward trip. The spirited horses pranced and swerved under the rein of their riders and poor Gogi was thoroughly disgusted with his shambling steeds and rocking, jolting cart. Over the cool morning air came the sharp reports of distant shots.

Choo-choo reined in his horse and dropped back alongside Gogi. "That is our kinsman welcoming his guests," he told Gogi. "It is always so in Men-

gralia. Each guest, as he arrives, is given a salute."

"It is the same with us of Guria," said Gogi hastily, glad to find that they had something in common. "And the guests give an answering salute."

"That is true," agreed Choo-choo. "It is a brave custom."

Again and again sounds of gunshots were heard as new parties of marriage guests arrived. Each time they were nearer and at last the house was discovered in a grove of tall trees well back from the road. Around the trunk of a giant tree was built a circular table about which the earlier arrivals were gathered. As Gogi's little cavalcade came into view the *padrone* of the house recognized his kinsmen and another volley of rifle and pistol shots rang out. Gogi could not help thinking how dead and dry they sounded without the mighty mountains to send them echoing back a hundred times.

The bride's father advanced to welcome them, and Vasso was forced to dismount and visit with the feasters for a while. Not to do so would have been a deadly insult to the host and his guests.

"Come," said Choo-choo to Gogi. "Get some of the good things while you may."

Gogi was interested to see what Mengralians gave their guests and willingly followed his guide. Many of the rich dishes were familiar to him, but not all.

"Here is something good," said Choo-choo, and thrust a dark piece of food into his hand.

Gogi bit into the offered titbit. It was, indeed, tasty. He asked what it was.

"That is a stuffed eggplant," said his young friend. "It is an eggplant stuffed with lumps of fat from a ram's tail."

Honeyed nuts followed the eggplant into Gogi's inquiring mouth. He washed them down with pomegranate juice. As fast as he disposed of one thing Choo-choo found something new until at last he was glad when the crowd of guests began to gather in a great, noisy circle and diverted his attention.

"Hurrah!" shouted Choo-choo, "they are going to fight their horses."

"Fight horses?" Gogi repeated in wonderment. "I have heard of fighting rams and roosters, but never of fighting horses."

"In Mengralia alone it is done," said Choo-choo. "You Gurians call us cowards and traders and say that we are afraid to fight, but there is

no tribe in all Georgia that dares to fight their horses as we do at our weddings."

"Those are the friends of the bride," continued Choo-choo, and he pointed to a group of horsemen that had collected on one side of the huge circle. "The other group is made up of the groom's friends and kinsmen. Now watch them fight!"

Someone fired a shot and the two parties of horsemen rode toward each other at a mad gallop. As they met every horse, as though he knew his duty, rose pawing and snorting onto his hind legs and threw all his weight onto an opponent. Here and there a horse fell or a rider tumbled from his saddle with the impact. Gogi stood spellbound and watched. Again and again the riders clashed until at last every horseman on one side had been either thrown or his horse felled to the earth.

A great shout went up for the victors, pistols were fired, and Gogi took a deep breath of relief when he saw that no one had been seriously hurt.

"No man shall ever call the Mengralians cowards to me," he told Choo-choo. "I felt sure that they would all be killed."

Music began and a dancer stepped into the

circle. He cast his round fur hat on the ground and started a dance. As he danced he sang, and the others joined in the chorus. Choo-choo explained the song.

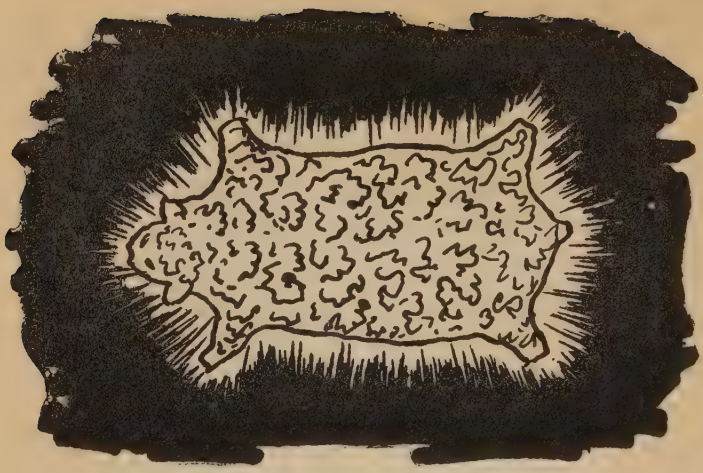
The man circled around his familiar hat and made as though he did not know what it was. Sometimes he thought it was a bear—at others a lion or a camel. He drew his dagger and approached to kill the awful creature. He stabbed the hat and discovered that after all it was only a cheese.

Vasso did not wish to be delayed by the wedding as he had been delayed by the funeral and in the applause that followed the dance he motioned to Gogi and the two slipped away. As they turned again into the main road they heard the strains of a song that followed the dance:

"Wassum warrada,
Wa, wa,
Wassum, warrada,
Wa!"

"That is the only real song that the Mengralians have," said Vasso. "And it has neither words nor end—just wassum, warrada, wa."

Gogi heard but he did not answer. He was afraid that he had eaten too much. He looked longingly toward the cool green slopes of his mountains and settled himself in the bed of the cart for the long journey home.



XV

The Golden Fleece

THE days grew warmer and warmer, the snow climbed higher and higher up the steep slopes of the mountains, and the little brook that ran in back of the little log kitchen shrank back into its shallow course and became clearer and clearer until the smooth polished stones on its bottom made little ripples on the sparkling surface of the water.

Keto noticed that Gogi disappeared for a short period every day. Sometimes it was in the morn-

ing and at other times it was in the afternoon, but always he returned from one point, somewhere along the brook above the house. Keto suspected that Gogi was hiding something from her—that he had a secret. She would have liked to ask him what it was, but she swallowed her curiosity and waited silently, if somewhat impatiently. Gogi always shared his secrets with her sooner or later.

At last her curiosity was satisfied. Keto was returning with her brother from the woods where they had gone for a frolic. Gogi led the way, but when he came to the brook he did not cross it by the stepping stones as usual, but turned sharply to the right and followed up the hither bank. Even before Gogi spoke, Keto was certain that her brother was about to show her the object of his mysterious business that so often took him on his lone jaunts above the house.

"I have a secret," said Gogi solemnly, as his sister, anxious to learn the cause for their turning away from the house, quickened her pace and came abreast of him. "It was to be my secret alone," he continued, "but it can be intrusted to you also. I know that you will not tell anyone."

"I always keep your secrets," Keto assured

him. "Did I not keep the one about the wild bees that you found in the wood? Oh, Gogi-heart, have you found another nest of bees? Where did you find them?"

"This is no nest of bees," said her brother, making a motion with his hand as though to brush the imaginary bees to one side. Nor did he tell his now impatient sister what it really was. "You shall see," said he, "for yourself."

The two children followed the brook until they came to a place where it broadened out and became quite wide. It was wider here than at any other spot which they had passed, but the water was very shallow. It seemed to flow more swiftly, too. Gogi seated himself on a large stone that jutted out into the stream, and having kicked his wooden sandals from his naked feet, rolled his baggy woolen trousers above his knees. Keto soon saw the reason, for this done, he slipped from the stone and waded into the running water.

"Ooooo!" said Gogi, as the chilly brook water lapped against his bare legs. "It is cold!"

Despite the cold Gogi waded out from the shore to about the middle of the stream. There he rolled his sleeves to the elbow and, stooping low, began to grope on the shallow bottom. Keto found a seat

"I have a secret," said Gogi solemnly.

on the stone which her brother had used and watched. Gogi fumbled with his fingers at some object hidden beneath the water and after a moment straightened up with something in his hands. It was dirty white in color, and water dribbled from the soggy mass to fall back into the brook in little silver splashes. Keto looked closer as her brother approached the shore grasping the thing which he had fished from the bottom of the brook.

"It is a ragged old sheepskin!" she exclaimed, and her face was clouded with disappointment as she eyed the sodden burden which Gogi deposited on the ground at her feet.

"To be sure it is a sheepskin," agreed her brother. "But it is no common sheepskin—it is a golden fleece!"

"That is no golden fleece," retorted Keto disgustedly. "I know it well. It is a piece which Father tore from his old jacket that used to hang in the barn. The jacket was no good and he took a piece to put under the buffalo yoke when old Rustam had a sore neck. A Kurdish beggar would not thank you for it. A golden fleece, indeed!"

"It is a golden fleece," repeated Gogi stubbornly, as he smoothed the wet skin on a flat stone

to dry. "Shall I tell you the tale of the Golden Fleece?"

"I always like to hear a tale," said Keto, "but you cannot make me believe that this old skin is a golden fleece."

"Perhaps it is not, after all," sighed Gogi, as he dug with his fingers into the matted wool. "For weeks I have waited for this time and now it seems that I shall find nothing. I shall tell you the tale, however, and then you will know what I hoped to discover."

"Many years ago," continued Gogi, "these mountains of ours were filled with gold. Every summer when the snows on their high peaks began to melt the mountain sides were streaked with little streams of water that rushed down to meet the brooks and rivers, just as they are in these days. But when there was gold in the mountains the water swept it up and along with it. The water was so swift that even the heavy grains of gold were washed along like sand and pebbles.

Gogi noticed that his sister listened eagerly and went on with his story: "Our people, in those ancient days, used to peg skins of sheep to the bottoms of the brooks at the time when they be-

gan to swell with the melted snow, and as the floods swept along the tiny grains of gold they were caught in the tangling wool. The sand and pebbles, which were lighter, did not sink into the wool and were carried on.

"Our people gathered much gold in this way and became very rich. They also learned how to make golden thread and cloth of gold and fine hilts for swords and drinking cups. Foreigners came from far over the seas to buy our gold or steal it, but many were afraid to visit us. In those times some of our beloved mountains were still fire mountains, and when they thundered and spouted smoke the outlanders were frightened. They counted our mountains the place where the giant who had given fire to man was imprisoned for this good act. When the mountains roared they believed it to be the groans of the giant, for he had been condemned to be tied forever on a great stone cliff; every day an eagle came and ate out his liver and every night it grew again. . . . This is the tale as the *natlia,* our godfather, told it to me."

As Gogi told the story he continued to search the wool for gold, and before the tale was finished Keto, too, was stooped over the old skin.

"It is no use," said Gogi at last. "There is no gold in this fleece. We could have sold it at the bazaar in Tiflis when *Deda*-heart takes us and bought things with the money."

Keto was not so disappointed as her brother because she had not really expected to find any gold. Nor had she waited all those weeks for the swollen brook to go down and leave a gift of yellow metal. She was very sorry for Gogi, though, and said as they walked homeward: "Never mind, Gogi-heart, you can try again next year. Perhaps you will have better fortune next time."

Gogi was too disappointed to think so far ahead as next year, and only shook his head sadly.

That night when they all sat in the kitchen by the brook and Vasso, having finished his supper of hot corn-meal porridge and cold red beans, leaned back to roll a funnel-shaped cigarette, the children told him about Gogi's golden fleece.

Father Vasso did not laugh at their story or call them foolish. He did not even smile. He just listened seriously, finished rolling his fat cigarette, and lighted it from a glowing coal which Keto handed him on a little piece of bark from the open kitchen fire. Perhaps Vasso remembered the first

time he had heard from someone the story of the Fleece of Gold and his own bitter disappointment when he found no yellow grains in the skin which he had pegged to the brook bottom with so much hope. Surely he remembered, for the words which he now spoke to his son were the same which a wise old man had spoken to him in his hour of disillusion.

"Perhaps," ventured Gogi, "the gold has all been taken."

"Gold has been taken and gold has been given," replied his father. "Gold of one sort was taken and gold of another and better sort given in its stead.

"The gold which you sought is evil gold. It brought much trouble to our people. We have a saying: 'Easy to get, but hard to hold.' So it was with this gold. A man had but to put his sheepskin on the bottom of a stream at flood time and, lo, after a few days it was heavy with yellow gold. Greedy neighbors came to steal the gold and the finders fought to keep it. It was seldom in those days that a man lived long enough to become gray-headed. Many young men died in battle before they had beards on their chins. We became a nation of warriors, always fighting to

keep our gold. But fight or not the gold was lost."

"Did the outlanders take the gold from us?" asked Gogi.

"The outlanders, especially the Greeks, took much of it, but much was spent in the very fight to keep it. Gold became scarcer and scarcer, and now there is very little to be found. In some streams the men of the mountains still peg their fleeces to catch the gold, but they find very little. Perhaps there is no more gold in the mountains; perhaps the rivers and brooks no longer flow in the same beds. Their courses may have changed so that their waters do not wash through the rich earth that holds the gold."

"But what is the other gold, Father-heart?" asked Keto. "What is the gold which was given in return?"

"I am about to tell of that," answered Vasso. "That gold is the good gold. It is good and brings good."

"Even when our land was filled with gold we suffered. The stony slopes of our mountains grew but little wheat. In times of peace our gold went for bread and in times of war our people died of hunger, gold or no gold. Because of the want

of bread we were often forced to make peace at a great sacrifice with our hostile neighbors. Our men were fighting much of the time, but even when they were at home they could not with all their labor make the scrubby wheat grow much higher than sheep's grass on the land that we have. It seemed that everything grew well—fruit, nuts, the grape—everything but wheat.

"Then it was that we got our gold returned from the West. The greedy Westerners, when they could find nothing more to take from us in the East, turned about and sought riches in the far West. In the West they found even more gold than that which had been ours, but they also found that which is even dearer to us than pure gold—they found Indian maize.

"Indian maize and tobacco—that is the gold which we got from the West in return for the gold which they took from us. Grain that will grow in every crook and crevice of our mountain home and tobacco that gives us all we want for our own use with loads to sell to others.

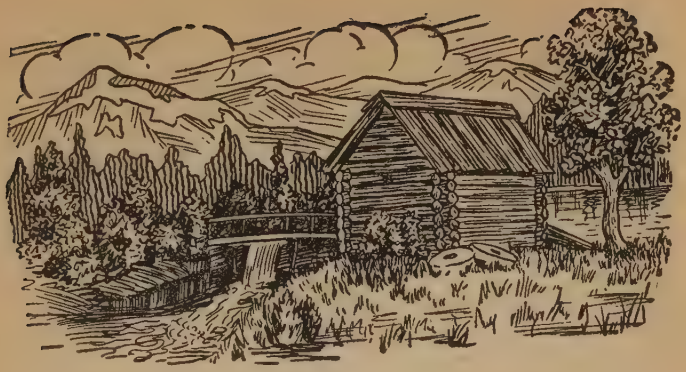
"Now we no longer fear famine and want. We shall never be hungry again. We have the gold of another sort. True, it cannot be had by casting a woolly skin into a brook. One must work; the

earth must be turned, the seed planted, the stalk tended, and the harvest gathered with labor.

"The other gold was 'easy to get, but hard to keep'; this golden grain that we eat and live by is 'harder to get but easier to keep.' "

Gogi had forgotten his disappointment by the time his father brought his story to an end, and at the last words he looked up with a smile and said:

"The next time I go to seek gold with skins the skins will be on the broad backs of our two black water buffaloes, Rustam and Nazira, or on my two hands that grasp the plow handles."



XVI

Games and Nuts

"*VAI-MI,*" cried Keto, as she rubbed her bruised knuckles. "I have forgotten how this game is played with sitting in the house all winter. That is the third time my stone has come down on my hand this morning."

"You should be a boy and play knucklebones," said her brother Gogi, laughing a little at her mishap, for it was not his hand that smarted.

Keto had been playing a game very much like "jacks," but in place of a bouncing rubber ball and little iron men she used a handful of little shells which the *natlia* had sent her from the seashore and a hard round stone. The stone, of course,

would not bounce like a ball of rubber, so she was forced to toss it into the air, grab up the shells, one, two, three or more, and twist her hand back in time to catch the falling stone. Sometimes Keto fumbled a shell in her grab at them or was a little too slow in turning her hand. When this was the case she got a sound crack on her knuckles from the hard stone that was sure to make them ache for a while.

Gogi would have been ashamed to play at "jacks," for he thought it a girls' game, but Keto, like most girls, was willing enough to play his boys' game with him.

"Where are your bones?" she asked her brother.

Gogi dug down into the pocket of his baggy homespun breeches, and when he brought his hand out he held in it a half dozen knucklebones —little roundish bones from the legs of sheep. He divided the bones with his sister and they each picked a firm smooth bone for a "taw."

Keto and Gogi were sitting on what they called the *maranni.* All that could be seen of the *maranni* was a smooth square of hard-packed earth on which not a blade of grass grew, although the ground all about was green. The *maranni* is the

spot in which the great earthen wine jars are buried while the wine is being cured. Grass is not allowed to grow on that spot, for one is always either digging another jar into the earth or taking one out to supply wine for some feast day. Some of these jars are big enough to hold a large cow, and many Gurians have jars in their *marannis* which have been in the ground for years and years.

Gogi drew a small circle in the clay surface of the *maranni* with a twig and placed one of his bones in the ring. Keto also placed a bone in the circle and they stepped back to play. It was very much like a game of marbles or "immies" played with bones. The bones, however, were not quite round as marbles are and for that reason were thrown and not rolled.

The game was to either bang a bone out of the ring or "kill" the other fellow's "taw." When a player lifted up his "taw" to make a shot, he drew a line in the dirt where it had lain. He could swing his arm as far back of the line as he wished, but if he went over it in throwing his "taw" it was "fudging" and he was fined a bone.

"You have won all my bones," wailed Keto before the game had fairly commenced.

"Here," said her brother, who was anxious for her to play a little longer with him, "I will give you some more. Is it not a better game than playing at 'stones'?"

"The game," said Keto, "is not nearly so nice, but I haven't hurt my hand in this game. It is not always the boys' games which are the roughest."

"Let us play 'Ups and Downs'," said Gogi, when he noticed that his sister was beginning to tire of playing at a game in which she could not win.

"We shall play for filbert nuts," said Keto, agreeing to the new game. "You have only a few bones and I soon lose my share. We can have as many nuts as we wish." And Keto ran to her mother to beg a double handful of smooth, brown filbert nuts.

"Mother did not give me so many, after all," complained Keto when she returned. "The box where she keeps the nuts is almost empty."

"We shall soon have fresh nuts," said Gogi. "I was in the woods yesterday and the green, feathery tufts that cover the nuts are turning yellow."

"The pigs know that the nuts are ripening,

too," his sister added. "They wander all day in the thickets and never come home in the middle of the day as they did when there was less to eat in the woods."

"Aye, and we shall soon have fun with the pigs," said Gogi, thinking of the sport to be had in playing tag with the snorting, greedy beasts in the filbert thickets.

"Let us go now to the woods," begged Keto. "Perhaps we shall be able to find enough ripe nuts for our game."

"Good!" agreed her brother, and hand in hand they dashed down the slope of the yard, past the little log kitchen to the bank of the shallow brook.

"Oh!" exclaimed Keto in pained surprise, when she saw the muddy torrent that rushed madly along between the narrow banks. "Surely this dirty water is not our lovely brooklet! See, it has hidden our stepping stones. It is far too deep for us to cross."

"It is raining in the high places," her brother explained, "and as a consequence our brook is having a hard time carrying all the water away. It will soon go down. It is not nearly so deep today as it was yesterday. Do you see the little tufts of leaves and dried grass that are hanging on the

roots and rocks above the water? That is where the brook come to a few days ago. As it goes down it leaves these marks to show the heights that it reached. I, too, have made a mark for the brook. I have cut a notch in the log that stands in the brook to hold up the corner of the mill. Every year I make a mark. Perhaps I shall one day make a mark higher than the one which Grandfather left when he was a boy. That year the water came so high that the kitchen was washed away and Grandfather's notch comes at the very top of the log—almost to the floor of the grist mill."

"But how are we going to cross?" asked Keto, anxious to change the subject, for she was a little frightened to hear these tales of high water and kitchens being washed away.

"We must follow the brook down to the mill and cross on the log," replied Gogi.

Keto and Gogi walked along the bank of the brook until they came to the old mill perched on its long legs high above the flooded streamlet. It stood on the farther bank and from its open door a huge log of wood stretched out like a bridge over the brook.

Gogi slipped off his wooden sandals and in his

wool-stockinged feet walked across the crude bridge without a waver. When he reached the rough floor of the mill he turned and motioned to Keto to follow. "Come," he urged. "You have crossed it before."

True, Keto had crossed it before, but never when the water was so high. As she stepped gingerly out onto the slippery log she glanced down at the swollen brook below. Keto was not afraid of high places; she had followed the sheep on their mountain paths, she had climbed high trees; but this was something different. The muddy water that rushed beneath her hesitating feet seemed greedy, angry, and she was frightened. She saw how it threw itself at the clay banks and swirled back in foaming eddies, how it wrapped itself about the long legs of the old mill as though it wished to tear them from its path.

What was it that Gogi had said? The brook had a hard time to take care of all the water that came from the mountain tops. "That is it," thought Keto. "The brook is not really angry; it is busy. It is hastening to carry the water down to the river and on to the sea."

To Keto the swirling water seemed no longer

terrible; the loud gurglings about the logs and the hissing swishings against the clay banks were no longer threatening. The brook was very busy and as it labored it sang a merry song—a working song such as Nina sang when she sat before her loom to weave, or such as father Vasso shouted as he followed the heavy plow and the sleepy buffaloes. Holding her sandals in one hand and lifting her skirts with the other, Keto walked firmly over the log to the farther side and stood beside her brother.

Brother and sister stepped from the platform of the silent mill and entered the wood that lay before them. Between the black trunks of the taller trees grew thorny clumps of *alutcha,* the sour Caucasian wild plum, and here and there a lighter blotch of green showed the presence of a filbert tree.

"Look!" cried Keto. "The greedy pigs have been before us!

She pointed, as she spoke, to one of the filbert shrubs, and Gogi saw that the soft earth all about the clump had been plowed and turned into a cloddy black circle by dozens of sharp hoofs and searching, pointed snouts. From the depths of

the thickets came an occasional snort or porkish squeal.

"*Abba!* Ugly face," shouted Gogi to the hidden pig. "You may eat in peace to-day, for we hurry. But beware when we come another time, for we shall give you the run of your life!"

Keto untied her apron and spread it on the ground beneath the tree. Gogi hunted about and found a long stick with a fork on the end with which he pulled the green boughs down within reach.

The tender nuts grew in clusters of three and fairly covered the parent tree, but they were not all ripe. Each nut was enveloped in a thin husk that opened out at the top into four feathered petals like a pale green blossom. Some of the husks had turned slightly yellowish where they curved around the smooth side of the nut, and these were the ones that were ripe for picking.

As Keto and Gogi picked they also ate, for the filbert is never so sweet as when it is still a little green. It is then that the meat fills the soft shell as full as can be and the goody is soft and milky and easy to chew.

"Enough!" said Gogi, and let the limb which he held in his long crotched stick slip out and fly

back into place. "We have filled your apron and there is no need to gather nuts and leave them for the pigs to eat. They steal too many as it is."

"Let us go home and give some to Mother," suggested Keto. "She will be glad to have a taste of the new nuts."

"Good," agreed her brother. "Perhaps she will kill a chicken and make a dish of *tsutsivi* with a sauce from fresh filberts. We can play 'Ups and Downs' with those left over."

This time Keto was not afraid of the roaring brook and soon they were back on the flat grassless square of the *maranni* playing at the game of "Ups and Downs."

Each in turn would take a knucklebone between thumb and forefinger and give it a fillip onto the smooth soil of the *maranni*. If it fell, as it usually did, on its flat side the player got nothing, but if it stood up on end the player won ten filbert nuts. It was very difficult to make the little bone stand on end, but sometimes it fell on edge and that meant five nuts to the lucky one who had thrown it.

This was a very exciting game. Even the men liked to play at it, and Gogi and Keto tossed the

tiny knucklebone back and forth until their play was interrupted by a loud squawking near the kitchen by the brook.

"Hark!" said Gogi. "I was right. Mother-heart is killing a chicken! *Vasha, vasha!* We shall have *tsutsivi* to-day. *Tsutsivi* with nut sauce from fresh filberts! Hurrah!"

Gogi leaped to his feet, scattering feathered filbert nuts right and left from his lap, and raced away toward the kitchen to watch his mother prepare his favorite dish.

Keto lingered behind to gather the nuts together, and as she scooped and scraped them back into her apron she seemed a little angry.

"Just like a boy," thought she, "to go racing off when he begins to lose."

Among the nuts which she had swept into a pile she saw something round and white. She picked it up; it was her "jack" stone. Keto tossed the stone into the air several times and caught it deftly as it fell. She tossed the stone again and as her hand turned to catch it she held a round filbert nut in her open palm.

"Ones!" said Keto, and tossed the stone again.

This time as the stone came down her hand held two nuts.

"Twos!" said Keto, and forgot that boys were such poor playmates sometimes.

"Squawk, squawk!" cried the chicken behind the kitchen.

"Threes!" said Keto, and tossed the hard, round stone again.

XVII

The Potter

"WE ARE going to have a visitor," said Keto to her corncob doll. "Old Pasha is bowing to us; when a dog bows guests are certain to follow soon."

The corncob doll did not answer; it just gazed with silly eyes from under its shocky wig of silk yarn, but the guest came. His appearance sent Keto flying to warn her mother.

"Hi, *Deda*-heart, the potter comes," she shouted. And Nina came from the kitchen to bid

him welcome, for in Guria any visitor that comes to the house is counted a guest. That he happens to be a trader and has goods to sell does not lessen his welcome.

The potter was a man stooped with age; and his old shoulders were bent still lower by reason of the great weight of his wares which he carried in a wicker basket strapped to his back. Two similar baskets were slung athwart a tiny burro which he drove before him with occasional soft prods of a stout traveler's staff.

The potter knew well the house of Vasso, and when he neared the gate he shouted, "Ho-a, ho-a," to his little beast, and shoving hard on the off basket, he turned him into the yard. The potter gave polite greeting to Nina and her daughter and slipped his pack from his back. The burro "hee-hawed" a greeting to the animals which he smelled in the barn across the yard, and immediately set about munching the long sweet grass that grew before the house.

"Welcome and rest thee," said Nina to the trader, and Keto poured water for his dusty tired hands. "Rest and eat, for I have a thing to tell you that may spoil your appetite if you hear it before a meal."

The potter guessed from Nina's words that she had found a bad pot among the last which she had bought from him, and he was troubled. He was not averse to giving a customer another pot for a bad one, but he was very proud of his work and felt shame for a poor pot or jar.

"What is at fault, O Woman of the House?" inquired he of Keto's mother. "Have I sold you a bad pot, or is it a *koki* for water, perhaps?"

"It is neither," answered Nina. "You gave me a poor *tchadi* stone which split the second time it was placed in the fire. When guests came and much *tchadi* was needed I was forced to bake my corn meal in an iron pan, and everyone knows that *tchadi* baked in an iron pan is not nearly so good as that from a stone *tchadi* dish of fine stone."

"I am pleased that it is not a pot or *koki,*" said the potter. "Poor pots mean a poor potter, but the best of eyes cannot see a weak spot in the depths of a slab of stone. When I carve the *tchadi* stones from a solid slab only the rotten spots that are on the outside can be seen."

"That is true and I do not blame you," said Nina. "I am only very sorry that my guests have been given so much poor bread since the stone cracked. I have still one old stone and I shall

buy two new ones this time; if one breaks I shall still be left with a pair."

"You shall have them and try them while I am yet here," said the old potter. He hastened to where his burro was grazing and fetched two heavy dishes carved from clean gray stone. "Make your 'noon bread' in these," he begged. "Let us see how they will stand the heat."

Keto accepted the two stone dishes from the old man and placed them carefully in the open kitchen fire bottom upward. Nina had brought the potter to the kitchen, and he sat on a low bench against the log wall and gave them all the news from miles around. Not a yard had a new colt or a house a new roof but the old wanderer knew of it, and it was part of his job to pass this gossip on to all that he visited in the course of his journeying. It was a pleasure both to him and to those he visited.

While the dishes were heating Keto dipped a small wooden bowl of corn meal from the round wooden drum that stood in the corner of the room. She pounded a few coarse lumps of rock salt into fine powder and sprinkled it over the meal. She dipped a gourdful of boiling water from the great iron pot that hung over the fire and poured it

over the meal. When the meal had steeped well and had grown cool enough to knead, Keto mixed it thoroughly with her fingers and patted the dough into the two dishes which she now dragged, hot from the fire. Over the *tchadi* dishes Keto placed sheets of iron and shoved them into the ashes near the fire. Over the iron covers she sprinkled embers and more ashes, and left the bread to bake.

At noontime Vasso and Gogi came from their work—Vasso from the woods where he had been chopping a tree with the right sort of bend for a new buffalo yoke, and Gogi from the tobacco patch where he had been hunting out and killing the tobacco worms that eat the broad green tobacco leaves. Father and son exchanged greetings with the guest-trader and after they had washed they sat down to hear their share of his gossip while waiting for the corn bread that was steaming and browning in the new *tchadi* stones.

"Blessings on your bread and salt," said the potter, when Keto dumped the fresh bread, baked to a rich golden brown, onto the crude table. "My stones are good—none better," he continued, "but more than a good stone is needed to bake such a *tchadi* as this."

"A good appetite to you," replied Keto, blushing with pleasure at the old man's praise.

Vasso broke the bread with quick snaps, for it was very hot, and placed a steaming chunk before each eater. "Eat, if it please you," said he to the potter, shoving his clasp knife in his direction so that the guest might cut himself a slice of the cheese that lay on the table beside a pot of relish made from green plums and red pepper.

The meal completed, the potter spread the wares which he carried in his basket on the hard-packed earthen floor of the kitchen. Deep bowls and shallow bowls, squat jugs and goose-necked water *kokis,* wide-mouthed jars and tiny drinking jugs called *tchintchari* stood in tempting array before the eyes of the admiring family. Some were glazed, some were plain, and still others were decorated with streaks of gay colors that gave their dull red sides a holiday glitter.

"Where do you find the clay of which you make these pretty blue bowls?" Keto asked the potter. She held in her hand one of the smooth glazed articles and ran a curious finger over its glassy surface.

"I find the clay for the pots in the country

around the village of Gori," said the trader. "But the smooth blues and greens are put on over the red clay of the pots before I bake them. That is a secret of my trade which my father taught me when I was a boy. Every potter has such secrets for glazing and coloring which he guards jealously and passes to no one but a son or close kinsman. If others learned the secrets they would make their own pots and we would lose our piece of bread."

"I have been to Gori with my father to buy cider apples," said Gogi, "and all the clay we saw was greenish white and sticky. Once it was rainy and our cartwheels bogged to their axles in the roads. How can you make red pots of white clay?"

"That is no secret," replied the potter, laughing. "I can tell you that. The clay is white when the pots are made, but it has iron in it. In the heat of the fire, when the pots are baked, the iron turns red. That is why I have red ware. If the clay had no iron it would not turn red and no potter would use it for pots then. Clay which does not turn red in the fire is very scarce and when it is found it is used for making chinaware such as rich people have on their tables."

"That is true," agreed father Vasso. "I have seen them making tile and bricks in the clay pits at Gori; they go into the ovens white and come out red."

"I have never seen such beautiful *tchintcharis*," exclaimed Keto, picking up one of the tiny drinking jugs.

A *tchintchari* is a small ewer with a body no larger than a lemon and a neck about six inches long that flares out at the top. They are used for drinking toasts on feast days when the whole family is toasted. The toast is passed to the drinker on a tray that holds a tiny *tchintchari* for every member of the family which is being honored. *Tchintcharis* are often given away after the toasts. Sometimes when the toast has been made on a very important occasion the little jugs are shattered on the edge of the tables as they are emptied. That is good business for the potter.

"*Tchintcharis* we need," said Nina, and she picked from the rows several little jugs that pleased her best in color and shape, and examined them closely for rough spots and cracks. "I shall have these," she added, when she had satisfied herself that they were flawless.

"The *tchadi* stones are good, mother-heart,"

said Keto, and she offered the newly bought stone bread dishes for her mother's approval. They were now quite cool and Nina took them in her hands and looked them over well before she nodded her head in assent.

"The *tchadi* stones and *tchintcharis* are all that I need," said she, turning to her husband. "Is there naught that you wish?"

"If St. Nina guards our grapes," he answered, "we shall need another *tchani* to hold our wine this fall." Turning to the potter, he asked, "What will a *tchani* of sixty buckets cost me, neighbor?"

By "a *tchani* of sixty buckets" Vasso meant a huge earthen jar such as are sunk in the ground of the *maranni,* to hold sixty buckets of wine. A bucket is about five gallons.

The potter, of course, understood and after a moment's thought he said, "Such a *tchani* will cost you three pieces of Turkish gold if you come to Gori and take it from my yard in your own cart."

Three pieces of Turkish gold seemed a great deal of money to the hard-working Vasso, and he said so. He and the potter haggled back and forth until the latter agreed to let him have the wine jar for two pieces of Turkish gold and five

buckets of red wine to be delivered when Vasso came for his jars.

Vasso and the potter struck hands to bind the deal, and the potter arose and prepared to make his departure. He repacked his unsold wares in the shoulder basket which he lifted to his back with Gogi's aid, and giving thanks to Nina for her hospitality, he bade the family farewell and went out to seek his burro.

At first the little beast was nowhere to be seen, but Gogi, who had followed the guest into the yard, soon discovered him.

"He is in the garden—the rascal," Gogi shouted. "He got through the hedge, baskets and all!"

When the potter joined Gogi he saw his burro kneeling on the soft earth of the turnip bed calmly munching the tops from the turnips and taking a nibble now and then to flavor his repast from the yellow saffron blossoms that grew between the rows.

"Ho—Bairam—Up! Up!" his master urged him, but the donkey paid him no heed other than a stubborn shake of his long-eared head. Nor did he rise until the potter, with Gogi's help, lifted the heavy baskets, burro and all, from the ground.

Once on his feet, however, he responded to his old master's cries and minced along the path before him with short prim steps.

"He is not even ashamed of his naughtiness," laughed Gogi, as he waved the old potter a good-bye.

The erring burro, Bairam, a long green turnip leaf still dangling from his busy jaws, trod stiff-legged down the road with his swaying load, his master close behind. The potter was following his beast with loud scoldings for his thieving, and as Gogi ran toward the little log kitchen to tell Keto about it all, he thought he heard the burro give a soft "he-haw."

XVIII

Hawking

GOGOOOO! . . . Gogoooo!"

When a person is called to in Georgia his name is always made to end in an "o." So when Gogi heard the shout he knew that he was being called. His heart jumped, for he thought he recognized the voice, and dropping the little stick with which he had been helping the worker bees kill the lazy, useless drones which they thrust from the depths of their hollow log hive, he hastened to the front of the house to answer.

At the gate that led onto the road stood a sturdy youth in a scarlet blouse. It was Vanno, the

son of big Grigo the blacksmith—Vanno the wrestler; and he hailed his young friend with another hearty shout:

"Victory to Gogi and long life!"

"To you victory, Vanno-heart; and may your trouble be on my head," answered Gogi, giving his hand into the strong, horny palm of the smith's son. "Welcome to my father's roof."

"I thank you for your welcome," replied Vanno, "but I cannot stop."

Gogi's face fell and his smile disappeared with disappointment on hearing the big lad's words.

"What!" he cried. "Have you come from your work in Batum only to return so soon?"

"No," replied Vanno. "Perhaps I shall not return to Batum. Your *natlia* has closed his business there. Has he not written you of this?"

"We have heard nothing," said Gogi. "But tell me, then. Why are you in such haste to-day?"

"I am but on my way to the house of the priest in Ozerget. He wishes me to repair the iron grille before the church and I stopped, hoping that you would care to go with me."

Gogi's smile returned in a moment. "That will be fun," he cried. "Just wait until I tell Mother

and Keto. I am sure that Mother will let me go with you."

Gogi was right. Nina willingly permitted him to go with Vanno and both she and Keto came out of the house to greet the smith's son and give him their respects to be carried to the old priest in the village church.

"Can I not carry some of your tools?" begged Gogi, pointing to what seemed to be a bag on Vanno's arm.

Vanno looked surprised for a second and then he laughed loudly. "The tool I have on my arm, Gogi-heart, is one that can carry itself," he chuckled.

"What sort of tool is this, Vanno?" asked the astonished Gogi.

"You shall see for yourself," returned the smith's son, and as he spoke he turned back the edge of the cloth that covered the bundle on his left arm. Gogi's eyes popped with wonderment as the folds were raised.

The bigger boy's hand was incased in a heavy leather glove that covered his wrist and forearm as well, and gripping the glove at the wrist were half a dozen wicked, long, black claws on the ends of as many slender, pale golden-yellow toes.

"A hunting falcon!" shouted Gogi. "A sharp tool, indeed!"

"His name is Hassan," said Vanno. "I have trained him all this spring. I'll wager there is no better hawk in all Guria. But that we shall see, for we shall hunt with him along the road."

"How does one hunt with a falcon, Vanno? I never hunted with one," Gogi said.

"I shall teach you," replied Vanno. "You will soon learn."

"It will be fun to learn," said Gogi gladly. "Perhaps I shall have one of my very own some day."

"Perhaps," agreed Vanno, and smiled, though Gogi could see nothing to smile about.

"Sssshhh!" whispered Vanno as they came to a turn in the road where a dense thicket grew. "There should be wood snipe in those bushes."

"Find a good stone to throw in the shrubbery," said Vanno, taking the cover from the hawk. The bird eased his white-breasted form and wriggled his long toes on the wrist that held him.

"Look!" cried Gogi. "He knows that something is about to happen."

The bird's head was still covered with a little hood of black velvet and it could, of course, see

nothing, but freedom of the cover told him that the fun was about to start. As a further signal Vanno stroked the velvet hood as though he were about to take it off also. The hawk poised and balanced on his wrist.

"Throw the stone when I snatch the hood off," ordered Vanno.

Gogi watched the smith's son closely. Vanno approached the brush with stealthy step and gazed into its tangled depths. Apparently satisfied that it contained birds, he made a warning motion to Gogi and slipped the velvet hood from the head of his falcon. Gogi cast his stone.

The hawk rose straight from his master's wrist, and as the stone crashed into the thicket there came an answering rustle and a brace of wood snipe fluttered up into the open air above the bushes. Almost without a waver the little hawk launched his powerful body after the two birds. His strong wings thrashed back and forth and like a streak of black lightning he struck.

The unfortunate snipe uttered a faint squeak of pain or fear, a handful of feathers flew from its body like a little flurry of snow, and the hawk settled to the ground with his capture a score of paces beyond the thicket.

"Come!" cried Vanno excitedly. "A kill—a kill! Hassan has got his quarry!"

Gogi was equally stirred and ran with all his might to keep abreast of his older companion. When the two boys came up the hawk was about to begin his feast on the dead wood snipe.

Vanno stepped swiftly to the side of his falcon and grasped the kill with his gloved hand. The sharp talons of the hawk still held the bird in their clutches and his yellow legs stuck up from between Vanno's leather-covered fingers. The hawk, looking down, could not see his prey, since it was hidden under the glove, but what he did see was a tiny chunk of raw meat which Vanno proffered in his free hand. The hawk accepted the morsel of flesh and settled himself again on Vanno's wrist. As he swallowed his reward Vanno slipped the little velvet hood back onto his sharp, hook-beaked head. The falcon was satisfied and Vanno had the bird, which he slung at his back by pulling its head under the strap of his tightly belted red blouse.

It all happened so swiftly that Gogi was not quite sure that it had really happened, but the proof hung at Vanno's belt. "Vasha!" he shouted. "This is prime sport!"

"It is called the sport of kings," said Vanno.

"A kingly sport, indeed," agreed Gogi. "Let us go farther."

A second bird was caught, and a third. Once when the hawk was released no birds flew from the thicket into which Gogi had cast his stone.

"Vai-mi!" said Vanno disgustedly, "that is bad. It is not good to fool the hawk. A few slips like that one and he will lose his eagerness. We must be careful."

"You had trouble getting him back onto your wrist, too," noticed Gogi.

When the two boys arrived at the house of the priest in Ozerget they had collected half a dozen birds. Vanno's belt was filled with the game and the hawk's craw was so stuffed with his gifts of raw meat that he looked like a pouter pigeon.

The old priest was delighted to see the boys, for he was very anxious to have the church grille fixed, and the brace of wood snipe which Vanno gave to him from the string at his belt made them doubly welcome, for priests do not always have too much to eat in their houses.

With his skillful hands, Vanno made short work of the broken grille. A rivet here and a rivet

there soon made it as sound and strong as ever, and the boys went into the priest's tiny house to eat a meal with the old man and gather news for the folks at home.

The priest's house was much the same as any other, Gogi noticed, excepting, perhaps, that the rooms contained a few more holy pictures or icons in the corners. At home without his golden vestments the priest did not seem so terrifying to Gogi as he did on ceremonial days in the church. At home he was just a smiling, kindly old man who knew how to talk with them about their crops of corn and their bees and their silk or tobacco.

His face was rather sad, perhaps because he had heard the troubles of so many unfortunate people. Or perhaps it was because he was lonely. The priest's wife was dead and he had no children of his own. A priest of the Georgian Orthodox Church marries before he enters the church, and if his wife dies later he is not allowed to marry again. There is a saying in Georgia: "There is another of everything but a priest's wife."

In the afternoon Vanno and Gogi set out on their homeward trip. The sun was in their eyes as they traveled, and since they had no time to

circle each clump of trees, they were unable to hunt the falcon.

"It is a pity," worried Vanno, "that we have not a few more birds. Four wood snipe will not make much of a meal for a family."

Gogi did not answer Vanno. His shorter legs had caused him to be always a little behind his older companion so that the poor disheveled bodies of the four dead birds had been before his eyes much of the time. Gogi wondered if it was such a kingly sport after all. He thought of all the hawks that soared free and unhooded in the air and wondered how many birds they slaughtered each day. Song birds, too, they would kill. To them it made no difference—just another bloody feed. Gogi began to be ashamed of himself for his share in the morning's hunt.

At dusk the pair reached Gogi's home and they stood a while at the gate. Vanno seemed to wish to say something and Gogi was still thinking of the poor dead birds.

At last Vanno said, "Here, take Hassan on your hand. He is yours if you wish him."

When Gogi got over his surprise, his first thought was to tell Vanno that he did not want the falcon.

"But," thought he, "that will only offend Vanno, who, after all, is only trying his best to please me."

Aloud he said, "I thank you, Vanno-heart. I shall look after him well. And I shall never forget our morning's hunt together."

Having said what he had tried so long to say, Vanno turned to leave. In parting he warned Gogi, "Give Hassan always raw meat to eat or he will lose his taste for fresh kills. Let him have the head or foot of a bird sometimes as I did this morning. And take him hunting as often as you are able. That will keep him in good training. . . . Good-bye."

"A good road to you, Vanno-heart, and thank you again," cried Gogi after the vanishing form of the blacksmith's son. But as he entered his own yard he looked at his hooded gift almost as though he hated it.

Gogi fastened the falcon to a post of the porch by a long string that gave him room to fly out in quite a big circle for exercise. He slipped the hood from the sleek head with its button eyes and wicked beak and said, before leaving him, "You have killed your last bird, Hassan. But in return you will never have to wear a hood again. You

will always see the bright sunlight. I would turn you loose, but you would only do harm."

The bird gazed at a passing chicken with a searching eye that made Gogi add, "And you shall eat boiled beans and corn bread in the future."

XIX

Departure for Tiflis

AS THE summer waned in Guria the grapes grew full and heavy on their parent vines and the corn tops yellowed. The saffron blossoms blazed in their wonderful color from the drying stems of their already leafless stalks. Wine press and treading trough of hollow log had been thoroughly scoured, the *maranni* had been opened and the empty *tchanis* washed and smoked with burning sulphur to kill the germs that sour the wine. Harvest time was at hand.

A neighbor returning from Batum had brought with him a letter to Vasso from the *natlia* in the city. The family had finished their frugal meal of corn bread and red beans boiled with dried sour plums, and Vasso prepared to read the letter by the light of a splinter which Keto had lighted in the open fire of the log kitchen and now held aloft. All awaited with interest to hear what the *natlia* had to say. The neighbor who had brought the letter had eaten with Vasso and his family and now he lingered so that he, too, might learn what news it was that the *natlia* sent.

"The *natlia* sends news, indeed," said Vasso, spelling the words out letter by letter, for Vasso had had but little schooling. The Russians who conquered the Caucasus and Georgia did not care for their subjects learning a deal. They built few schools, and in those that they built they did not permit the children to learn their own Georgian tongue. What Vasso knew of his own letters he had learned from his mother and the village priest. For a hundred years mothers and priests had saved the rich tongue of the Karthli from being lost forever.

Vasso continued, "The *natlia* writes that he is

about to move his business from Batum to Tiflis. Now that we have driven off our oppressors Tiflis has become a busy city. The *natlia* is a wise man and he knows what is best."

Gogi, who had awaited his father's reading of the letter with a smile of pleased expectancy on his young face, could keep silent no longer. Tears came into his eyes and his voice shook a little as he interrupted his father. Keto looked at her brother and felt very sorry for him. She knew what he was going to ask before he spoke.

"Then," said Gogi, "I cannot go to live with the *natlia* in his house and study in the school."

To Gogi the world seemed suddenly upside down, and only by winking his eyes very fast could he keep the tears back while he waited for his father to spell out the next words. Nina looked at him with sad brown eyes and Keto reached out and touched his hand. Gogi knew that they understood but that only made him feel all the more like crying.

The *natlia* must surely have known how his news would affect Gogi, for in the very next line he hurried to do away with his fears. Vasso raised his gaze from the sheet of paper to give his family the news that followed.

"The good *natlia* says," he continued, "that Gogi must not worry about the change, for the schools of Tiflis are even better than those of Batum."

The *natlia* wrote much more of this and that but Gogi no longer harkened to his father's voice as he droned out the words one by one. In a moment all his dreams of school had been shifted to Tiflis—Tiflis which the *natlia* and others who had traveled called the Paris of the East. Tiflis, where the iron road, driven by electricity, rattled up and down the very streets of the city!

"Perhaps," thought Gogi happily, "I shall see *Tchuenni* Noah!" He meant Noah Jordani, the president of the Georgian Republic—that kindly old man who had delivered his countrymen from Russian tyranny and was known to them only as *Tchuenni* Noah—Our Noah. If a few tears still trembled on Gogi's long black lashes, they were no longer tears of disappointment, but of gladness. Keto edged closer to her brother.

"Oh, Gogi," she cried, "you will live in Tiflis and eat white bread at the *natlia's* table every day! Will you have a blue uniform with shining silver buttons such as the schoolboys whom we saw in Batum wear?"

"Of course," said Gogi, his eyes shining like the buttons his sister spoke of. "And shoes that shine, too, and are held with little strings on hooks or else with white buttons; and a stiff cap with a polished peak and a badge of silver leaves with the letters 'T.M.G.' which stand for Tiflis Boys' High School."

"The cap and the uniform will be nice," agreed Keto, "but the shoes such as they wear in the city are not for the hill people of Guria."

"The bad comes with the good," her brother reminded her. "I shall grow used to the shoes. Clothes cannot make city men of hill people."

"That is true," Keto said. "Uncle Kola has worn the shoes of the city for many years, but he does not forget that he is a Gurian of the hills."

"I shall be like Uncle Kola and the *natlia,*" Gogi promised. "When I come home I shall take off my straight trousers and wear my baggy, roomy *sharavari,* and when we climb together or chase pigs I shall put on my rawhide *tchouvaki* instead of city shoes."

"They say that *Tchuenni* Noah, himself, wears *sharavari* and *tchouvaki* when he visits his home in Lantchout," said Keto.

"*Tchuenni* Noah never forgets that he is a Gurian," replied Gogi. "That is why we all love him. He is a great man."

The time passed in happy planning between tasks of gathering the ripened corn and the leathery pods of beans whose vines twined about the tall cornstalks that took the place of bean poles. It was the best time of the year in Guria, and as the day for departure drew near Gogi found himself sorry to leave it all. He wondered who would climb the trees with Vasso to gather the grapes . . . who would creep out on the farthermost branches that were too small to hold his father. He asked his father about the smaller branches.

"It will be hard without you, Gogi-heart," said Vasso. "I am afraid that many bunches of grapes will have to rot on the vines this year."

"Perhaps I might come home at the time of the picking of the grapes," suggested Gogi.

"School is of more importance than a few grapes," answered his father. "We shall manage. I shall make a knife on the end of a long stick that will reach out to the bunches on the slender branches. Mother-Nina and Keto will stand beneath the tree with a sheet and catch the grapes as I cut them down."

"Why don't our Gurian grapes grow on bushes like those in the other parts of Georgia—like the grapes in Sveria?" sighed Gogi.

"Many years ago our grapes did grow close to the ground," said Vasso. "That was before our people fell under the Moslems. The Moslems caused our grapes to become like they are."

"What did the Moslems do to our grapes?" asked Keto.

"They did nothing," answered her father. "That is what caused them to climb the trees. Moslems are forbidden by their law to make or drink wine, so they did not train or care for the grapevines, which soon ran wild and climbed the trees. Grapevines in Sveria are clipped close each year."

"But when the Moslems were driven out," asked Gogi, "why did our people not plant other grapes or trim the wild ones?"

"That is because," explained Vasso, "our people found that the wild grape gave a new kind of wine—a wine better than the old grapes. Gurian wine is prized very highly by those who know it."

"Then the Moslems did some good, after all," said Gogi.

"That is a poor return for the harm that they did us, Gogi-heart," Vasso responded.

"The law of the Moslem says he must not eat pork," said Gogi. "Why did they not kill all the pigs in Guria while they were here?"

"A Moslem despises a pig so much he will not even kill it unless it is actually doing him some harm," explained Vasso. "The pigs ran wild like the grapevines."

"Is that why we have so many wild pigs in Guria?" asked Gogi.

"That is why," answered his father. "And that is why the pigs that we keep at home are so much like the wild ones—big heads and little bodies and long tusks and tails."

Gogi remembered the *natlia's* letter. "Is it true," he asked, "that the *natlia* is coming in the autumn to hunt the wild pigs?"

"That is his wish," said Vasso. "It has been many years since the wild pigs came so near to the houses and villages."

Gogi's heart was lightened by the thought that he would soon be able to visit the home folks, and when the day came for his departure for the city of Tiflis and the *natlia's* house good-byes were easier to say.

His baggage was small—underclothes and woolen socks which Keto and his mother, Nina, had woven for him—for his country breeches would be sadly out of place in the city. The *natlia* would soon have a fine blue uniform for him and all that went with it—shoes and shirt and visored cap of blue with a silver badge.

At last everything was ready and the day had arrived. The cart awaited Gogi at the gate of the yard and father Vasso stood in the door of the kitchen to hurry the women. Nina gave one last tug at the huge knot that tied the four corners of the piece of cloth in which her son's things were wrapped. With the back of her work-worn hand she wiped from her brown eyes something that looked very much like a tear. Keto was crying openly. A big lump came into Gogi's throat when he saw their tears, and for the moment he wished that he were not a boy so that he might cry, too. Nina took a seat with Keto on the kitchen bench. Vasso sat on the door seat and Gogi, taking his bundle in his lap, sat beside him. Nina and Vasso folded their hands in their laps and sat silently gazing on the earthen floor at their feet. Keto and Gogi folded their hands in imitation. They knew that this was the way that Godspeed

was given a traveler about to set out on a long journey.

For a full minute the four sat in this manner. They spoke not a single word and the stillness was broken only by the sobs that sister Keto could not choke back. To Gogi the minute seemed like an hour, for he was dreadfully frightened that he would cry, himself, if he were not soon on his way. Nina arose and gave Gogi a last big hug before she let him turn to the waiting cart. Vasso turned away from his weeping wife and daughter and pulled very hard at his long, silky-black mustachios.

Gogi scarcely understood his mother's farewells. He heard her say, "God bless you, Gogi-heart. . . . A good road. . . . May your troubles be on my head," and somehow he found himself sitting in the rocking cart, his bundle grasped in his arms, and his cheeks still wet with the tears from his mother's eyes. Vasso spoke but little and Gogi did not feel like talking.

At the station of Natonebi Vasso bought the ticket to Tiflis and he and Gogi stood on the little station platform and watched for the train. People passed and bowed to Vasso, touching their foreheads with the tips of their fingers. Some who

knew him better stopped for a minute to ask whither he traveled.

To such questions Vasso would reply proudly, "I go on no road. It is my son whom you see here —he goes to the city of Tiflis for study in the school there."

Then the men would slap Gogi on the shoulder and say, "Life to you, Vasso's son. May your troubles be few!" And to Vasso they would say, "Surely you are a proud Gurian who sends a son to the city. There will be much news to be heard under your roof when your son is home again."

To these hints Vasso would answer, "My roof is your roof. My bread and salt is your bread and salt. Come and the news shall be yours also."

The train came and Gogi climbed into the tiny, toylike coach and, opening a window, took his bundle from the hands of Vasso. The gong on the station rang two bells for "make ready" and three for "go"; the engine ahead gave a sharp toot of the whistle and the little station began to slip behind. The locomotive puffed sturdily to start the long string of cars, a few of them passenger coaches, but most of them freight. Clouds of cinders shot up from the engine stack and then wind whipped them stingingly against Gogi's

cheek as he thrust his bare head through the window to get a last glimpse of his father.

At the side of the little station Gogi saw the cart with the two sleepy buffaloes. The yoke had slipped onto the animal's black horns and their great square heads with jaws chewing their cuds were lowered almost to the ground. Vasso stood still on the station platform pulling his long black mustachios. As Gogi watched, his father groped in the deep pocket of his baggy pants, pulled out a ragged square of white linen, and blew his nose. The whistle blew and the train hid itself in a deep cut between the hills. The old familiar scene and his father's form were lost to sight beyond a curve of the track, but Tiflis lay before.

XX

School

LIFE in Tiflis, during the day, was far too exciting to let Gogi feel lonesome. Only at night when he lay alone in the little room which the *natlia* had set aside for his use did he suffer from homesickness. The thick feather mattress, soft as down, seemed to Gogi ten times harder than the felt pad on his rude *takhta* at home. The quiet

of the sleeping city was not like the quiet of the Gurian night. There was no chuckling murmur from the little brook that flowed beside the log kitchen at home, and no sound of barking in the darkness as when old Pasha warned away some four-legged thief that came too near the hen house or kitchen larder. But the lonesomeness of each night was soon forgotten in the adventures of each day that followed.

Many visits were paid to the tailor shop in the bazaar quarter of the city beyond the yellow river Kura. One after another and row on row the tailor shops stood side by side, for in Tiflis all shops of a kind are close together. Gogi could always tell a tailor shop because there were always several huge tailors' "gooses," as their heavy irons are called, standing before the door with their handles and tops shoved to one side so that the charcoal with which they were newly filled might burn up in the open air of the street. The *natlia* explained that the irons, if brought in before the coal was glowing red, would give off gas and make the heads of the tailors ache so that they could not work.

The shop where the *natlia* had ordered Gogi's uniform was owned by an Armenian—most of

the tailors were Armenians—and it was so dark and dingy that he wondered how anyone could possibly work in such a hole. Working they were, for all that. As Gogi's eyes became accustomed to the murk he saw that the room was almost filled with huge broad tables. On each table sat a tailor, and sometimes two. Every man had his feet drawn closely under him and was stooped low over some garment on which he sewed busily. Over every neck hung a little hank of thread cut the right length and all ready to be slipped into the needles when needed. One man as Gogi watched spread the coat he was sewing over a little padded, coffin-shaped box and covered it with a fragment of thick canvas. He then took a big swig of water from an earthen jug that stood on the table beside him and spluttered the water from his mouth over the canvas. Next he rubbed the whole with a tiny chunk of soap and began to iron it with a "goose" which an errand boy fetched on his call. Great clouds of damp steam came hissing from beneath the hot iron, and as they were wafted to Gogi's nostrils he recognized what it was that gave the shop the strange odor which he had noticed when he first entered.

On their first visit they were welcomed to the shop by the Armenian owner. He sat always on the table nearest the door, from which he jumped as soon as ever a customer entered. He, too, carried the hank of thread around his fat neck, but besides the thread he had also a measuring tape. His sly gaze took in his new customers at once, and when Gogi and the *natlia* arrived he guessed straightway, "A city godfather comes with his country godchild to prepare him for the city school." It was not the first time he had seen such a pair, and he rubbed his hands in pleasant expectation, for he knew that it meant at least a uniform and a long greatcoat. "Welcome, Lordheart, welcome," said he. "You are fortunate in finding me, for I am the best tailor in Tiflis."

This bragging seemed very impolite to Gogi but the *natlia* only smiled good-naturedly, for he knew that it was the custom of all Armenian tradesmen. He had done business with their sly kind before.

The master tailor pulled bolts of fine cloth from broad shelves that were built in beneath the tables and unrolled them so that Gogi and the *natlia* might make their choice of shade and texture. All the time he kept up a chatter—what

a fine tailor he was—what fine goods he sold—how cheap his prices were. If the *natlia* heard he showed no sign of it. He felt one piece of cloth and another, rubbed them between finger and thumb, held them to the light, smelled them, and even tried one or two with a match flame to see if they were pure wool as the man claimed. At last he chose a piece and then began the haggle with the tailor about the price. That in turn was settled and the tailor began his measurements.

"Hold up your arms, Lord-heart," aid the tailor to Gogi. Gogi held his hands over his head.

The tailor took the measuring tape from his neck and began to swing it about Gogi's erect body. The tape was weighted on one end with a brass ring and in the tailor's hands it seemed almost alive. It writhed and twisted like a slender snake—around his waist, around his chest, down his back, down his leg, and across his shoulders. The tailor carefully checked off each length with his broad thumb and shouted the figure to an assistant, who jotted them down with a piece of hard soap on the bolt of blue cloth which the *natlia* had chosen for the uniform.

Gogi was glad when he was allowed to drop his tired arms, slip on his discarded peasant

jacket, and get out of the stuffy shop into the sweeter air of the street. The *natlia,* too, took a deep breath as though he were equally glad. The tailor bowed them out, and as they left murmured something about a fitting in two days.

"And now for a cap," said the *natlia,* taking Gogi by the arm and leading farther along the narrow street. "The hatters are just beyond and hats are ready made. In five minutes you shall wear the badge of your school."

A score of paces brought Gogi and the *natlia* to the first of the hatters. A huge cap made of tin and painted in true colors hung before the door, but without this Gogi would have known that it was the shop of a hatter. On a row of little sticks behind the dingy glass of the window were draped dozens of curly lambskins—lambskins from which are made *pappakas,* the round fur hats of the Caucasus. Badges, too, of all sorts and shapes were displayed on cardboards that leaned against the glass.

Many things were in the make-up of the different badges—hammer and tongs, hammer and wrench, squares, anchors, and compasses—for every trade and profession is represented by some emblem. Two snakes coiled about a staff with

wings was the badge of a *feldscher,* a doctor's assistant. The hammer and monkey wrench, or American wrench as it was called, Gogi had remembered seeing in the velvet band of the caps which engineers wore. The engineers had come to Ozerget when there had been talk of building a branch of the iron road from Natonebi. They had looked at one another through long brass pipes that stood on three legs; they had waved their arms and shouted and driven dozens of tiny wooden pegs into the earth and left. The tiny pegs had had tiny scraps of red cloth tied to them like flags, and the engineers had worn fine caps with badges such as he now saw in the window of the hatter.

"Perhaps," thought Gogi, "I shall be an engineer and build tracks for the iron road." And in dreaming of this he forgot that he had not discovered his own badge until when the *natlia* called to him from the open door of the shop.

The hatters, like the tailors, also sat on their tables, but the tables were smaller, as were the irons. Some of them sat before sewing machines so tiny that they were almost hidden beneath their huge spools of thread. All about were round blocks of wood. These were the blocks

upon which the finished hats and caps were ironed and shaped and left to dry.

Stack on stack and row on row in shelves behind the master's sewing table stood the finished caps. Some were made with bands of green velvet and some with blue; some were piped with red, some with black, and some with yellow, for colors had a meaning as well as badges. They showed the wearers' trades and ranks. The owner took down one of these stacks and passed cap after cap to Gogi until he found one that fitted him well. At the top of the stack were the smaller sizes and the larger were at the bottom. This saved the trouble of numbering them.

School caps are worn rather small, and Gogi stepped before a cracked looking-glass and wondered at the change his cap made in his face. It seemed to him that his face had suddenly grown very round and fat beneath the little blue velvet cap perched on the crown of his close-cropped head. There was something strange about the cap that Gogi wore, something rather amiss. And then Gogi saw.

"It has no badge!" he exclaimed.

"So it hasn't," agreed the *natlia,* and at a nod from him the shopkeeper hastened to the window

and returned with a card full of silver badges from which he chose the right one and affixed it to the front of Gogi's cap.

"Ra lamazia!" cried the pleased Gogi. "How pretty!" And settling the new cap firmly onto his head with the shiny little visor bent in close against his forehead, he followed the *natlia* from the shop.

"Now you are a schoolfellow," said the *natlia.* "All shall know you by your cap and badge."

"There will be no better cap in all the school, I am sure," said Gogi proudly. "Thank you, *natlia*-heart, thank you!"

"You are welcome, Gogi-heart," replied the *natlia,* and then he chuckled to himself. "But I fear that it will not be the finest cap in the school. You are going to be disappointed, Gogi-heart."

"Surely it was the best cap in the shop of the hatter," said Gogi with some surprise. "It was the dearest of them all."

The *natlia* laughed again. "Caps in school are not judged by their cost," he explained. "At the school, you will find, the best caps are the oldest caps. The older a cap—that is, the longer the owner has worn it—the more it is prized. Students buy new coats and capes and great coats as often

as they can, but new caps—never. In school a good cap is an old cap."

Gogi was none the less thankful on hearing this. He knew that it took a good cap to last to be an old cap and his was surely good as he still judged it. Gogi wondered at the queer ways of the students as he paced beside the *natlia.*

For shoes, the *natlia* took Gogi to his own cobbler. The cobbler made shoes only to measure and order, but as luck had it he was left with a pair which had been a mite too small for another customer but which fitted Gogi exactly. He slipped off his worn rawhide *tchouvaki* and tried the shoes.

"A good fit," said the *natlia,* thumbing them on his godson's feet. "Now you are a student, top and bottom, at least!"

Gogi took a few steps to see how it was to walk in shoes. They seemed very heavy, and try as he would the heels dragged on the ground. He had never walked on any heels but his own before. His many-colored, tasseled socks, into which his bagged breeches were tucked, looked strange above the black polished shoes. He pulled the legs of his breeches from his sock tops and let them fall down over the shoe tops

As Gogi followed the *natlia* homeward his feet began to ache and burn. He thought his socks were falling down; there was nothing to hold them up now that he had discarded his *tchouvaki* with their long leather thongs that had bound his legs from ankle to knee. His breeches legs, no longer held snugly to the calves of his legs, flopped about as he walked and felt very loose and uncomfortable.

Gogi was glad when the evening meal at the *natlia's* house was eaten and he was free to go to the little room which he had been told to call his own. He picked up his new cap from the bed where he had carefully laid it; he blew upon the badge and shiny black visor and polished them on the rough sleeve of his jacket. They were very fine indeed. He sat down on the bed and unlaced his new shoes. His toes were numb and the soles of his feet burned like fire. His heels hurt, too, and when he had stripped off his heavy socks he saw that there was a flaming red spot on either heel.

"Blisters," said Gogi, and touched the tender places with a surprised finger. Not a stone in all the mountains of Guria was hard enough to bruise one of his horny, thick-skinned heels, but one short

walk on city streets in city shoes had raised two huge blisters.

"When you live with wolves you must howl life a wolf," said Gogi to himself, meaning "When in Rome, be a Roman!" Others wore such shoes and wear them he must. Shucking off his clothes, he crawled into bed and blew out the candle that stood at its head. Through the window of his room the moon shone faintly and the silver cap badge caught a ray and sent it flashing back to Gogi from the bedpost where hung his scholar's cap. That night Gogi was not so lonely, and despite his aching feet, or perhaps because of them, he was soon asleep.

XXI

Gogi Meets a Stranger

GOGI was glad that his *natlia* was a wealthy man—that is to say, sufficiently wealthy to buy a pupil's uniform for his godson. The first lesson that Gogi learned in school was not taught him by the teachers but by the boys themselves. He learned that the worst thing that could happen to a pupil in the big city school was to be different from the other boys. Other boys had been less

fortunate than Gogi, or poorer, and came to school in their country costumes of homespun brown and with their feet shod in rawhide sandals. Many boys were cruel enough to make sport of these country pupils, and when Gogi took the part of one of them he discovered that his city clothes had not changed him altogether.

"*Guriani, Guriani*—A Gurian!" the boys shouted, for they had discovered his home and tribe in his manner of speech. The Gurians always speak very rapidly and sometimes they give a twist to their words that is strange to city ears—especially in Tiflis. In his anger for the mean actions Gogi had spoken even faster—so rapidly, in fact, that many of his hearers had not even understood all that he had said. Enough that they understood him to be a Gurian and a country boy. Fingers were pointed at him and words were shouted in his ear with the strange twist given them by the Guriani and thought to be funny in the city.

Gogi glanced about at the grinning circle of faces. They reminded him of jackals. He told them so.

"Jackals, jackals!" said he, and this time he took care to speak slowly so that everyone understood.

One of the jeering boys stepped closer to Gogi. He was taller than the rest and dark. He looked like an Armenian. Afterward Gogi learned that he was an Armenian.

"I'll teach you how to talk, *Guriani,*" said the tall boy, and knocked Gogi's new cap from his head.

In a moment Gogi forgot what the *natlia* had told him—to take such talk as a joke. Gogi lost his temper. He grappled the bully, and before the crowd knew what was happening the big fellow lay howling on the ground. It was a wrestler's trick that Gogi had learned from Vanno, the son of Grigo the smith—Vanno, the best wrestler in western Guria.

"Vasha, Guriani—Hurrah for the Gurian," cried an admiring voice from the crowd. Soon all were shouting, *"Vasha, Guriani!"* That is, all but the big boy who took the tumble; he was glad to get away unnoticed.

"We are friends," said one boy with a smiling face, as he embraced the still angry Gogi. "We are friends if you will be friends with jackals. It is only jackals, after all, that scream and howl, but are afraid to fight."

Gogi glanced around the circle of faces again.

This time they seemed more friendly. In many eyes he saw admiration for his feat of fine wrestling. They were not such a bad lot after all.

"Khargi!" said Gogi. "Good, we are friends."

So began Gogi's first day in the city school at Tiflis.

In the schoolrooms there were many things that made for wonder and admiration: shiny desks with seats that tilted up when one wished to stand; a great clock—Gogi had never seen a bigger one out of a church steeple—which hung on the wall; most wonderful of all the huge "stone boards," as Gogi called the slate slabs that formed the blackboards around the room. They were as big as a barn door, Gogi thought admiringly. How small seemed his own little slate in its rude wooden frame which Vasso had whittled for him—the little slate which the city teacher told him he would need no longer. In the city school they wrote on paper; paper was far too scarce to use for simple practice in the old priest's odd classes which Gogi had attended. Paper was for letters.

How still it seemed in the classroom when the pupils were studying! No one spoke. The classes of the old priest had differed in this, too. There everyone had mumbled the words of his lesson

aloud as he studied. The little room behind the village church had sounded like a big hive of busy bees. Gogi, in spite of himself, began mumbling aloud from his book in the old way, but he soon heard a warning "Tsssst!" This was the teacher, and as Gogi glanced up he saw the teacher shaking his ruler at him and frowning angrily. The ruler was long and round and heavy. Gogi had heard from the older pupils that the teachers sometimes used such rulers to whip erring boys: to strike the palms of their hands for punishment. After that Gogi was careful to keep silent as he studied, although he had to bite hard on his lip to do it.

Gogi missed the girls, too. Only boys attended this school; the girls went to one of their own where there were no boys. To make matters worse, the teacher called him Georgi, Son of Vasso; Gogi —the name to which he had answered all his life —was a pet name. Gogi understood that they were all thought to be young men and too old for pet names, but he still loved his and the new way of calling him seemed strange and unfriendly after that other homely, familiar sound.

The teacher was a man, and he looked very young to Gogi in spite of the little black, spiked

beard that grew on his chin. Gogi even wondered if so young a man could know as much as the aged priest who had taught him his first letters and words. Doubtless not, for after a while the teacher left the room and for a whole hour his place was taken by a priest in long black robes who prayed for a space and then settled himself to hear their catechism. He was not so kindly as the country priest and spoke very sharply to those who faltered in their recitation.

When they had said their catechism the priest lingered to tell the class something more. "You have all learned to read and write," said he, "but the writing which you all know is the sort which is called the soldier's writing. Good St. Mesrop, who gave us the art of putting words on paper and stones, gave us two writings which are used by all learned Karthli: the soldier's writing, which you know, and the priest's writing, which you are all now to learn."

Gogi had heard of this other writing and he was pleased that he was about to hear something more of it. The priest went on to explain.

"St. Mesrop," said the priest, "gave a writing to the Karthli and to the people of Hai-stan whom we call Armenians, and to each he gave

their own, the letters being somewhat different for each. These letters are very beautiful and have many turns and twists, some being broad and black while others are very fine."

There was silence in the classroom as the priest continued: "As you all know, there was never one, nor is there one, among all nations so warlike as our people of Karthli. We have always been fighting for the freedom which we love. On the battle field the soldier cannot take the time and care which is needed to form the beautiful letters of the 'priest's writing.' Therefore our soldiers began to leave out the little turns and twists, one by one, and in their desire for speed they let their letters run together in a way that tied one letter to another. That is how we came by our 'soldier's writing' which is now used by all.

"The people of our country," continued the priest, "who put down the stories of our wars and of our tribes and their histories were the priests and writers. In this they took great pride, and since they also enjoyed the peace of their own homes away from the noise and bustle of battle and siege, they were able to take the care needed in using the 'priest's writing,' the beautiful let-

ters of which are much more fitting for such work as was theirs. The Armenians, who are a nation of traders and flee all war even at the cost of their liberty, have never changed their writing for one like our 'soldier's,' for their writing is done in the quiet of their shops and counting houses.

"So,' 'said the priest, "he who would learn of the greatness of the Karthli and of their brave history must learn likewise the 'writing of the priest.' To such wonderful treasures these letters are the only keys." And turning to the broad slate at his back, the priest took a fragment of chalk in his fingers and deftly sketched the letters of the beautiful "writing of the priests."

In the evenings after school Gogi liked to saunter slowly along the great street that led toward the house of the *natlia.* The Street of the Castle it was called, for a great castle frowned down onto the street. Sometimes Gogi walked in the beautiful park that stretched beyond the castle itself. Once it had been the playground for the Russians, who had ruled the Karthli with an iron hand, but now in these days of freedom it had been thrown open for all visitors. Children dashed and played about the lawns and walks where a few years before none but the highest Russian officers

and the grandest Russian ladies had strolled—officers with brave uniforms and clanking spurs and fine ladies in fine clothes. Gogi did not worry a great deal about the Russian officers and fine ladies that had lost their playground—it had not really belonged to them at all—they had taken it away from the Karthli and had been forced to give it back. And now Gogi and his school friends played in its cool hiding places.

Sometimes Gogi took the back road and followed the river Kura. On the far side of the stream were the baths. Their round domes lined the cliff-like bank, and the hot sulphur water that trickled from the springs over which they were built spilled down the steep rocks, taking on many brilliant colors and forming long iciclelike spikes that hung in clusters and festoons from every stony shelf.

Beyond the baths were the tanyard, the flat roofs of their low buildings crowded with racks and racks of drying hides. When Gogi saw brown icicles hanging over the river or yellow streaks of water flowing down the farther bank, he knew that the color came from the powdered oak bark used by the tanners in curing the leather. Still farther beyond arose the slim spearlike towers of the Moslem churches—*metcheds,* they were

called. Each tower had a tiny door at its top that opened out onto a tiny railed platform that ran around it near the top. From there it was that the crier or *muezzin* called the Moslems to prayer. He called them so often that Gogi wondered how they ever found time to work.

On rainy afternoons Gogi read. He had quickly mastered the "Priest's writing" and in the library of the *natlia* he found much to read: stories of Gurg-Arslan, the Wolf-Lion; of White Georgi, his namesake; and the wonderful tale of "The Man in the Tiger's Skin." With pride Gogi saw that the greatest of the writers also were Gurians, as were the greatest of soldiers.

One day he saw a stooped old man limping along a path in the castle garden. He seemed very tired and worn and took a seat on the bench where Gogi had placed his books while he played at knucklebones with his friends in the cinder path. As Gogi played he saw that the old man had taken up one of his books and was scanning its pages with his spectacled old eyes. When Gogi had finished his game and was ready to go home he went to get his books. He gathered together all his books but one. That one the old man still held, although he did not seem to be reading it. The

book lay open on his lap, but his eyes were closed as though he were sleeping. Gogi did not wish to disturb the old man, so he softly seated himself on the bench beside him, intending to wait until he awoke.

The old man could scarcely have been sleeping for he heard Gogi, quietly as he had moved, and opening his eyes he smiled at the boy.

"Health to you, uncle," said Gogi. "I am sorry if I awoke you."

"Long life to you, son-of-my-heart," answered the old man. "You did not awake me. I was not sleeping; I was only dreaming."

Gogi was ashamed to remind the old man that he still held his book, and the old man seemed to have forgotten. He still sat with the open book on his lap and looked away into space with tired eyes. When the old man at last remembered and returned the book to Gogi with an apology for keeping him waiting, Gogi asked if he had finished the story which he had been reading.

"I know the story," replied the old man. "I have read it many times, but to-day my eyes cannot see the letters of its words. I would have liked to read it once again."

"I shall be glad to read it to you," said Gogi.

"I have read it many times, also, but I would like to read it again."

"Then read it, and life to you, son-of-my-heart," answered the old man eagerly. "I can think of nothing that I would like better."

The old man's tired eyes closed again as though he slept, but Gogi knew that he listened, so he began the story of "Surabo, the Boy-Hero of Suram."

XXII

The Legend of Surabo

THIS is the story that Gogi read in the castle garden to the tired old man who sat beside him on the garden bench with eyes closed as though in sleep.

The Tale of Surabo

Through the mountainous heights of Suram which divide the East from the West of Georgia there is a single narrow, rocky passage. It is called the Pass of Suram. On a stony ledge above the

Pass of Suram rot the ruins of a once-powerful stronghold from which the Karthli guarded the gates to the heart of their country. It is the Castle of Suram. It was the strength of ancient Georgia and the despair of all their enemies.

During the reign of a fortunate and victorious King of Georgia the old castle, which had already stood many, many years, fell under an evil enchantment. The strong stone wall that frowned down onto the Pass so terribly began to crumble and totter and fall, little by little, to the river and road below.

This enchantment had been wrought by an evil old witch who lived in a cave near by. Once upon a time she had been the betrothed of the king himself, but finding out that she was as evil as she was beautiful, the king very wisely decided that she was unfit to be queen over his people and wed another. For this reason there was nothing too evil for this old witch to plan against the good king as a revenge.

Time after time the wall was rebuilt, but as often as it was rebuilt it fell again. The king was in bitter despair. He knew not where to turn. The Persians might fall upon the kingdom at any moment and without the mighty castle to oppose

them they would soon conquer the entire country and make slaves of all the Georgians, as they had tried to do many times before.

The best stone mason and the best bricklayers from all the kingdom were brought to Suram, but all their skill was used in vain. The new wall completed in the evening always lay in ruins the following morn. The king was at his wit's end when one of his nobles told him of an old witch who lived in a cave above the castle.

"She is very wise," said the noble. "She has performed many strange miracles and if there is any help for us she is our only remaining hope."

The king was willing to do anything to save his people from slavery to the Persians so he was delighted to learn of the old witch from the noble. He did not guess that this was the same person who had cast the spell on the castle nor did he know that she had once been his old sweetheart whose love had turned to terrible hate when he wed another.

"Go," said he to the noble who had spoken, "and bring this wise woman to the castle at once. She shall have all that she desires if she will only raise the spell from our castle so that the wall will cease to fall and crumble."

The noble hastened to the dark cave where the old witch lived and gave to her the king's message. She put on her black shawl, and leaving a bowl of milk with corn bread for her cats, she clambered down the side of the mountain in the path of the returning noble.

The king was awaiting her impatiently and when she arrived he admitted her immediately. "I have been told that you are very wise," said the king to the witch, not recognizing her for what she was.

"You have heard the truth," returned the witch in a sour voice. "Why have you disturbed my peace?"

"A great trouble has come upon us," said the king. "We are like to be conquered by the Persians and be sold into everlasting slavery." And he told her how the wall fell down as often as it was rebuilt in spite of all the skill of the best builders and stone masons.

"That is a small matter which can soon be fixed," said the witch, when she had heard the tale of woe.

The king was greatly delighted to hear these words, and his kindly face broke into happy smiles for the first time since misfortune had come upon

the castle above the pass. "Life to you, mother-heart," cried he to the old witch. "But tell us what we must do to keep the wall from falling."

The old witch cackled evilly. "That is, as I have said, very simple. You have but to find a young boy who has never done any wrong and who is willing that you plaster him up in the wall as you rebuild it. With his body in the stone wall the spell will be lifted from the castle and the wall will last forever and ever, though other walls rot and crumble to the dust from which they were made."

The smile had left the king's face before the old woman had said many words, for the king was a man with a very tender heart and he could never do the awful thing which the old witch advised. He became very angry with the old crone and shouted to her to be gone at once. The witch was glad enough to go, and she did so with another evil cackle in the place of a farewell.

The king and his court were again plunged into the deepest despair. They could not bring themselves to do the terrible thing which would break the spell. They resigned themselves to their fate and were ready to retreat as soon as a messenger brought news of advancing foes.

One morning a beautiful young boy stood at the gate of the castle and begged admittance to the throne of the king. "I have come," said he, "to save my country. Let the stone masons plaster me into the wall so that the spell may be broken and the castle be strong against the enemy."

"We know you," said the nobles who had heard his plea. "You are Surabo, the son of the widow. Surely you have never done any evil and you are your mother's only son. Why, then, should we do evil by you? You are too young to die."

"No man is too young to die for his country," said Surabo bravely. "Take me before our lord the king."

The nobles saw that Surabo could not be dissuaded, and after paying many compliments to his high courage, they took him before the king. The king listened to Surabo with tears in his eyes, for the price seemed too great to be paid. He, too, spoke as did the nobles who had first heard the tale.

"You are too young to die."

To the king Surabo answered as he had answered the nobles: "No man is too young to die for his country. It is better that I die alone than all our brave warriors fall in hopeless battle and

our women and children be taken as slaves into Iran, the land of the Persians."

When the king heard these words he could not forbear weeping bitterly, and all the nobles who stood about his throne also wept with him. Surabo, alone, from all in the room did not weep. He stood straight and brave before the king's throne and repeated: "No man is too young to die for his country!"

When the king saw that Surabo had set his heart on giving his young life for his country and that he could not be dissuaded he agreed, although he greatly feared that the sacrifice would be in vain. He summoned the master mason and told him to gather stone and mix mortar and make all ready for building the wall once again.

That evening the masons began the erection of the new wall. High on one smooth side they left a small opening, and into this niche stepped Surabo of his own accord. When Surabo had stepped into the niche of the wall the masons began to close the opening with brick and stone.

Surabo's mother, the poor widow, stood with the people below, but she was so weighted with grief for her son that she could not watch the building of the wall that was to bury him alive.

She knelt on the cobbles of the castle yard beside the king and prayed. All about them the nobles and other people also knelt and prayed. Only the masons worked and labored, stacking stone on stone and brick on brick.

At last the weeping mother broke her prayer, for she could not bear to wait any longer, and cried out to her son: "How high, Surabo-heart? How high is the wall?"

"To my knee, mother-heart, to my knee," answered Surabo.

Again the people and the king and the mother wept and prayed until the mother again broke her prayer and asked: "How high, son-of-my-heart? How high is the wall?"

"To my waist, mother-heart, to my waist," answered Surabo.

The mother and the people, on hearing the brave boy's answer, fell weeping still more bitterly, until the mother again asked: "How high, son-of-my-soul? How high is the wall?"

"To my breast, mother-heart, to my breast," answered Surabo.

A fourth time the mother ceased her weeping and praying to ask: "How high the wall, Surabo-soul? How high the wall?"

"To my eyes, mother-heart. Farewell! To my eyes. Farewell . . ."

When the people heard these words they wept even louder than before. The masons wept also and tears oozed from the very stones of the castle walls.

Once more the mother cried out: "How high the wall, Surabo-heart, son-of-my-soul? How high the wall?"

This time no answer came to the waiting throng and when they looked up they perceived that the stone masons had plastered in the last stone and were smoothing the face of the wall. Surabo had given his life to save his country and his people!

The multitude wept with a voice that could be heard for miles and the king wept more bitterly than any other, but over the loud grief of them all came the high, sorrowful wail of the widowed mother of Surabo:

"Vai-mi, Chemi Surabo,
Vai-mi, chemi shvilo!"
"Woe is me, my Surabo,
Woe is me, my man-child!"

The following morning when the Persians came to attack the pass the castle wall stood high

and strong against them and from his gates the King of Georgia drove the foe with great slaughter.

This is the tale of Surabo, the son of the widow; Surabo who some say was really a prince; but queen's son or widow's son he is the princely hero of the Pass of Suram.

Hundreds of years have passed since the masons plastered the brave youth into the stones, and since that time castles have been built and castles have fallen, nations have come and gone, but the enchanted Wall of Suram has lost no single stone. It still stands a lasting monument to the heroism of the widow's Surabo.

When Gogi finished the Tale of Surabo he closed the book and turned to the old man. His eyes were still closed, but he bowed his head a little to show that he had heard all, and aloud he said:

"Life to you, son of Guria, and thanks."

"To you life and health," answered Gogi, and began to strap his books together with a leather thong.

The old man also arose to go. "We have no more Surabos in these days," he remarked, sadly,

shaking his head. "And now we need them more than ever before."

"But my father says that we have," objected Gogi. "That is a tale of itself."

"Who are these Surabos, these brave young men, of whom your father has told you?" asked the old man.

"The greatest of them all," said Gogi, "is not a young man, but he is as brave as Surabo for all that. He is Noah Jordani, the president, whom we Karthli call 'Our Noah.' "

"Yes?" said the old man, with more interest than he had shown before. "Tell me how he is like Surabo."

Said Gogi, "My father says that he too, like Surabo, has let himself be walled up in a stone wall to save our country. He is seated, night and day, in the castle which stands before these very gardens, and he is giving his life for the Karthli.

"He is very old and weak and is a cripple," continued Gogi. "He has labored many years to gain us our freedom, and the Russians who were our masters sent him far into Siberia as an exile because he wished to save our people. Now that we are once more free he is forced to work night and day to hold our freedom for us. Always he

sits in his little room in the castle yonder and plans for our good . . . and he is old and ill and should have rest. My father says that the stone wall of his office is smothering him just as surely as the wall smothered Surabo of Suram, and that he knows it, but does not fear to give his life for us."

And then he added, "Our Noah is also of the people of Guria. His village is just over the hill from ours and I have seen his house which stands in Lantchout. There are none like our Gurians."

"Noah Jordani," said the old man, "should be very proud that he is able to give his life for the Karthli, for his is an old life and he has not long to live at best."

And the old man added, "It is good to be proud that you are a Gurian, for surely the Gurians are good people. But so are the people of Imeritia and Sveria and Ratcha and Kakhetia—all the people of the Karthli. It is good to remember that first we are all Karthli, for if we do not all stand together—Kakhetia and Imeritia and Guria and Mengralia and the rest of the tribes of the Karthli—we shall surely lose the freedom which you say Noah Jordani is buying with his life. We must forget our tribal quarrels and stand together," he repeated, and with these

words he looked full into Gogi's eyes, and with a friendly nod and a smiling farewell he turned away and limped slowly back toward the castle that stood at the front of the gardens.

When the old man looked full at Gogi the boy thought that he saw something familiar in the tired, sad face. His thought went back to the old man again and again, but he could not remember where he had seen him until he glanced up at the schoolroom clock the following morning. Hanging below the great clock of the schoolroom was the picture of an old man with a thin gray beard and sad tired eyes. It was the same to whom he had read the Tale of Surabo. It was Noah Jordani, he who was known as Our Noah—the president of Karthli!

XXIII

The Turkish Bath

IT WAS a Friday morning. Gogi and the *natlia* were on their way to the baths above the river Kura. *"Abanoshi,"* said Gogi to the driver of a a *phaëton,* as the cabs are called, and taking a seat in the vehicle beside his godfather, they were whirled away with a clatter toward the Kura Bridge and the far shore of the river that housed the baths. *Abanoshi,* as you may have guessed, means "to the baths."

The *natlia* had a lovely bath in his own house, but he always visited the city baths once a week.

He found the sulphur water from their hot springs good for his health, and he liked the massage which the bath attendants gave so well. Fridays the baths had not too many visitors and the *natlia* liked to go on then. Friday is the day of rest for all Moslems so all Moslems go to the bath on Thursday. Sunday is the Christians' day of rest and they generally bathe on Saturday; Friday is thought to be unlucky by many who are superstitious. Saturday is the day of rest for the Jews but since they never take baths in the Caucasus if they can avoid doing so, Friday, the day which should really be their bath day, is quite free of a crowd.

When the cab came into the narrow winding streets into which the baths opened the driver turned about to ask which his patrons wished to visit. The *natlia* pointed with his stick to one at the foot of the alley. It was a tall stone building with a front made entirely of light blue tile with red borders. Its great dome that rose above the roof was surrounded by dozens of smaller domes, and every one was set with hundreds of tiny round glass windows no larger than a saucer, that sparkled and flashed in the sun's white light like diamonds in a crown.

"Bbbbbbbb!" called the driver to his horses and pulled them to a flourishing halt before the doors of the Orbilianni Bath. The *natlia* threw the man a coin and followed Gogi into the bath.

"You have chosen a new bath," said Gogi to his godfather. "Do you find something wrong with the other one?"

"It is not that," replied the *natlia*. "This bath has sulphur springs much hotter than all the rest. I feel the need of very hot water to-day, for my rheumatism is troubling me a little."

"Is it true that the Tiflis baths are good for sickness?" Gogi questioned the *natlia*.

"They are very good indeed," asserted the *natlia*. "It is because of that that Gurg-Arslan, the Wolf-Lion, built the city of Tiflis. Many years ago, when Gurg-Arslan had become a very old man, his only pleasure was an occasional hunt in the thick forests that grew at that time all along the shores of the river Kura. One day when he was stiff and tired from the hunt he stopped near one of the warm springs and bathed. The next day he felt much better. The next time he hunted in this direction he did not forget, and when the hunt was finished he took another bath. Again he found that it caused him to feel much better.

Then it was that he decided to build a castle near these healthful springs of warm water so that he might bathe each day or when he wished. About the castle houses sprang up, and soon there was a tiny town. This little town grew and grew until it became the great city in which we now live. *'Tiflis-skhali,'* it was called—warm waters, that is—and this name has been shortened to Tiflis."

"I have seen the ruins of his great castle on the side of the Hill of St. David, above the school," said Gogi. "And we read of his war against India in our book of history in the class-room."

A man with nothing on but a red towel about his waist met them and took them to a private room where they undressed. When they had taken off their clothes they, too, tied themselves about with red towels, and opening a low door in the rear of the dressing room they entered into the bath. In the bathroom were two stone benches and a deep square bath that was level with the floor and into which led a set of stone steps. Gogi and the *natlia* threw themselves at full length on the two stone benches and the bath attendants (another had now joined the first) cast buckets of hot sulphur water over their bodies. When

the two bathers were quite wet the men made great buckets of frothy soapsuds and soaped Gogi and his *natlia* until they looked like two white marble statues. Then they went into the next room and smoked while Gogi and the *natlia* "soaked."

When their cigarettes were finished the bathmen returned, and slipping their hands into rough mittens woven from tree bark, they began to scour and scrub the bodies of the bathers. After this scouring Gogi and the *natlia* jumped into the stone bath and rinsed themselves clear of soap. Gogi remained in the warm, gassy water of the bath, but the *natlia* climbed out and lay down again on a bench. He was about to have his men give him a massage.

The tiny bubbles of gas clung to Gogi's naked body for a short while and then burst. There were millions of them and they made a little tickly feeling as they exploded, hundreds at a time, all over his body. The bath attendant was massaging the *natlia.* With one hand he lifted huge folds of the *natlia's* skin, and with the other hand he struck these folds heavy slicing blows. It was just like chopping wood. Then he put his two hands on the *natlia's* shoulders and began to tread on his back

with his naked feet as a baker mixes dough. He twisted his arms and hands, his legs and feet; he rubbed his neck this way and that, and then as a last touch he gave the *natlia's* head a sudden twist that made a crack like a rifle shot. This ended the massage, and the attendant then left as the *natlia* joined Gogi in the marble pool of hot spring water.

Half an hour later Gogi and his godfather were out of the bath and stood again on the street. "Greetings of light steam," said Gogi. This is the salutation always given to one who comes from the bath.

"And to you greetings of light steam and long life," answered the *natlia.*

Gogi looked up at the sun to see the time. It was near noon, he decided. Even as he looked he heard the high thin wail of the *muezzin* from a big mosque beside the bath. He was calling the Moslems to noon prayers. "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet," he cried in a weird singsong tenor. As he sang he held his hand to the sides of his mouth to carry the sounds afar to the most distant Moslems.

Below in the yard of the worshipping place all was bustle and noise. The worshippers who lived

near by were congregated about a fountain of flowing water and were washing their feet and hands and mouth, for every good Moslem washes before he prays. If there is no water he may use ashes. If neither water nor ashes are to be had, he may use dust or dry earth. Some of the most devout had their prayer rugs with them in little rolls which they carried beneath their arms. Others were content to kneel on the straw mats which were free for all on the floor of the mosque. Many who lived some distance from the mosque prayed at their homes or in their shops. Moslems pray so often that if they were to come from some distance to pray at the church they would have only time enough to reach home before the *muezzin* called them for the next prayer.

Even some of those at the church chose to pray outside. Gogi saw them spreading their prayer mats and rugs or already bending and rising with their faces always to the east—to the east where lies the body of their prophet Mohammed. As each man finished his prayers he sat for a few minutes with hands folded quietly, or counted a little string of amber such as all peoples of the Caucasus carry.

"*Akha!* Thither!" cried the *natlia,* raising a

beckoning finger to a passing cab. The driver drew up to the curb and Gogi and the *natlia* were rattled away from the bath and back through the narrow, cobbled streets toward the New City, the better quarter and home.

"Ya-vash! . . . Ya-vash!" shouted the driver, meaning "Look out! . . . Look out!" for the streets were crowded with porters carrying huge boxes and bundles as large as small houses on their backs. One man was carrying a piano alone with only four helpers who, now and then, lifted it up so that he might hitch his shoulders into a more comfortable position. Tiny donkeys trotted along hidden beneath the tremendous loads on their skinny backs—baskets of pottery, stacks of hay, great earthen jars filled with milk or cool water from a famous spring beyond the town.

Here and there a circle of porters sat about the tiny charcoal stove of a street vendor whose business it was to sell them little chunks of mutton fried over his stove on splinters of wood. Some of them munched sheets of soggy bread as thin as paper. Others rolled their chunks of meat in the bread and ate it in this manner. All seemed to be enjoying their simple meal.

"Oh, what a tiny church!" exclaimed Gogi,

pulling the *natlia's* arm to draw his attention toward a small chapel that was almost lost in a tumbled pile of wretched shops and storehouses.

"That is the Chapel of St. Nina," said the *natlia.*

"St. Nina, who baptized the Karthli?" asked Gogi.

"The same," agreed the *natlia.* "The tiny church which you see was built to protect the cross which she used when she made Christians of the Georgians. It was woven of grapevine."

"The priest has told me of it," said Gogi. "It was stolen by the Russian soldiers when they first came into our country."

"That is true," said the *natlia.* "People used to say that the Karthli would never be free again until the Cross of St. Nina was returned to the place where it had hung for so many years."

"But we have freedom again," Gogi said. "Is the cross back?"

"It is not the cross that brings freedom," said the *natlia.* "It is that which the cross stands for: courage and love for your fellow man."

"That is what *Tchuenni* Noah said," Gogi remembered.

The *natlia* had the cab stop at the head of the

big bridge over the Kura and he and Gogi took a cool drink of spring water from one of the men who sold it. The man carried the water in a tall brass ewer which was strapped to his back. A long hose led from the bottom of the ewer with a little spigot at the end which he turned to fill a cup with a drink. While he was serving his customers the man continued to shout from time to time, *"Sauk-soo, sauk-soo! . . .* Cold water, cold water!" The ewer was decorated with tassels of scarlet silk, and a spike that stuck up from the battered lid was fitted with a little bell that kept up a constant jingling as the man walked or tilted his jug to pour a drink.

Gogi noticed from the man's dress that he was a Tartar; most street venders in Tiflis about the Old City are Tartars. Gogi saw other venders who were not Tartars, however. Neither were they dressed like Georgians or Armenians. They wore full-bloused blue trousers and tight blue tunics buttoned down the side. On their heads were blue caps, and their feet were shod in soft boots, the tops of which were telescoped in dozens of fine folds over their ankles.

"Who are those people?" inquired Gogi. "They have strange clothes. I have never seen such

clothes in any other place. What is their tribe?"

"They are not a tribe," replied the *natlia.* "They are called *kintos.* Their business is selling on the streets. Sometimes they steal, also. They come from all the nations of the Caucasus, but most of them are Georgians and Armenians."

"They have queer clothes," said Gogi.

"They have queer ways," said the *natlia.* "Do you see the heavy silver belts which they wear about their waists?"

Gogi said that he did, and asked why they were so large and broad.

"All a *kinto's* wealth is in his silver belt," explained the *natlia.* "The profits in money from his trade in fish and fruit and greens he spends on wine, of which they are all too fond. Now and then when there is a little extra money the *kinto* buys a new silver bangle for his belt. When the weather grows so cool that it is no longer comfortable to walk about the streets and sell things the *kinto* does something bad—steals or fights; for this the police send him to the jail for a few months."

"Why should anyone wish to go to jail?" wondered Gogi.

"No one but *kintos,*" laughed the *natlia.* "They

are so lazy that they had rather go to jail than work in winter. By the time spring comes, with the warm weather, their time in jail is finished and they come out into the sunshine again."

"They come out and go to work again?" asked Gogi.

"Yes, they go to work again," said the *natlia.* "But first they must get money with which to buy the goods which they sell. To do this they borrow from a money lender and leave their fine silver belts for a pledge. When they have made enough money from their peddling they buy back their belts. So it goes year after year; always the same. They never marry and never save any money or buy a house. When one of them dies the others who know him best sell his silver belt and with the money which they get for it they buy a coffin for the dead *kinto* and bury him. With any money that is left over they buy wine and hire musicians and dance and drink at the grave side as long as it lasts."

"Yes," said Gogi, "their customs are even stranger than their clothes, which are surely strange enough."

XXIV

The Pig Hunt—At Home Again

ONCE again Gogi stood on the little station of Natonebi. Everything was just as he had left it when he set out for the trip to Tiflis. It seemed to Gogi that he had been away for ages, but the two buffaloes were chewing their cud at the end of the station platform and the white scrap of linen which Vasso now waved to his son might have been that same one he pulled from his pocket when he last bade him farewell. Things move slowly in the mountains of Guria—things and people.

The same people who had bade Gogi Godspeed were there to welcome him home, and many were

their exclamations of *"Va-katso"* and *"Abba"* as they looked him over with admiring eyes. To them he was already a city dweller, and city dwellers are much respected in the far parts of the Gurian hills. That night they did not forget Vasso's invitation to come and receive their share of the news from the city, but it was not Gogi that passed it on. It was the *natlia,* for the news was grave, indeed, and called for serious talk. The Armenians had opened their gates to the Russians, and the Tartars to the north had also fallen before a new Russian invasion. In Tiflis it was feared that it would not be long before a Russian army marched against the Georgians. Noah Jordani, the president, was ill in his bed, and his ministers were quarreling among themselves. Grave news this was to Gurian ears.

Vasso, however, would not allow his guests to think too much about trouble that might come. "Our *natlia* has come to us from the city for the sake of sport," said he. "Let us be merry while we may. To-morrow we go to hunt the wild pig in the thickets of our Gurian mountain slopes."

"It is a good sport," said one, "and they have become as thick as the Russian soldiers used to be."

"It is the ripening grapes that have brought them down from the higher places," said another. "The hills are littered with rotting grapes."

"The blessed St. Nina has been good to Guria this year," said Vasso. "Never have I seen grapes so plentiful and so rich. I have put two more wine *tchanis* in the earth of the *maranni* and still I have not enough to hold all the harvest. Glory to St. Nina!"

"Glory to St. Nina," said all the guests, and made the sign of the cross on their breasts.

Gogi fell asleep and still the men talked, for visitors from the city are scarce and they were hungry for news. Nina had set a good table, too, which they were loath to leave—cold roast pork with sauce of burnt grape juice, and rich cheese toasted on the coals. Vasso had opened the *maranni* and filled a tall earthen *koki* with wine, and from time to time the huge black drinking horn was passed among the guests. There is no end to Georgian hospitality, and there seemed to be no end to news from Tiflis, so that the sky was already showing gray with the dawn before the guests arose to go. Nina had long since gone to bed, and when Vasso had seen the last visitor go

he and the *natlia* lay down to snatch a little nap before daybreak.

A great clatter in the yard awoke Gogi the following morning. It was the noisy arrival of Vanno, the wrestler, and his father, Grigo. They had come to join the hunt. Clanking against the frame of Vanno's saddle were half a dozen sharp bright spearheads. He had forged them with his own hands. All that was needed was to cut long staves for them from the forest and there would be a good stout boar spear for every member that wished one.

"Gomar-juba!" shouted Gogi to the new guests. "Victory be with you!"

"Long life!" cried Vanno and his father, dismounting from their horses.

Gogi had pulled on his baggy trousers and slipped his feet into his rawhide *tchouvaki* at the first sound of their arrival, and he was at their side almost before their feet touched the ground. In spite of the guests who had sat so late, Vasso had not overslept, for he too appeared from beyond the log kitchen by the brook and hastened forward to join his son in welcoming Grigo and Vanno. Even the *natlia* was up, but his city eyes,

unused to the early hours of the country, still looked a little sleepy.

Steaming corn bread and a fat roasted chicken were soon laid before the men on the rough board of the kitchen table, and as they ate Vanno and Grigo listened eagerly to the news which the *natlia* had brought from Tiflis.

"Then it is another war," said Grigo the smith, shaking his head sadly, for he had seen other wars. "Are we of the Karthli to be always fighting? Must we always fight or be slaves?"

Vanno did not look so sad. He stooped over Gogi and whispered, "Now is come my turn. To this war I shall go!" Vanno was a member of the Young People's Regiment, a sort of National Guard, and they would be the first to be called in case of a war. Gogi was proud that his big friend would be able to go and fight for his country, but he was sorry that he was yet too young. Vasso would also go, for he was captain of the little band of neighbors that lived thereabouts. When they had formed their little company of volunteers they had called Vasso as their leader, for Vasso was also an old soldier, though not so old as Grigo the smith. All would be gone but Gogi, and he felt very much out of it all.

"But this is killing us no pigs!" exclaimed Grigo at last, for it would have been impolite for Vasso to tell his guests that it was time they left the table to get ready. "Let us see to our guns and spears and be off to the hunt. To-day we hunt pigs, to-morrow the Russians may hunt us!"

"Have you the food for our lunch?" asked Vasso, turning to Gogi.

"Mother has wrapped it for us," his son answered, and pointed to a bundle tied in a square of cloth. Beside the bundle lay a small skin filled with wine. This was too heavy for Gogi, and Vasso would have slung it across his own stronger shoulders had not Vanno begged to carry it.

"Gogi and I shall be the cooks and get the dinner," said he. "In the woods we shall pick a good place for our camp and hang the wine skin and bundle of food on a limb. Then we shall be free to hunt with the rest."

The little party of hunters followed a sheep path that wound through the forest and up the side of the mountains beyond the brook. Grigo had hurried ahead, and when the rest overtook him he was trimming half a dozen wooden shafts for the spears. These he had cut from young saplings with the stout knife which he carried at his

belt. To each of the party he gave a new-cut haft and a spear head. Each man whittled down his haft to the right size and fitted the head onto the stave.

"Now we are ready," said Grigo, who was the best pig hunter. "A little more to go and we shall see our first pig."

"We are already near," said Gogi. "Look, here are pig hairs in the rough bark of this tree. They have been scratching themselves against it."

"Yes," said Grigo. "And do you see how the bark on the grapevines is chewed and broken near the ground? That is where the pigs have wrestled with the vine to shake down the grapes."

"And the ground is all rooted up as though it had been plowed," added Gogi. "I can see their tracks in the soft earth."

Vasso and the *natlia* carried guns with bayonets on them; they loaded them and made ready to meet a wild pig. Grigo and his son did not carry rifles. They thought it better sport to kill the pigs with spears. Gogi was thought too young to have a gun.

As they climbed higher the trees became smaller and more knotty. The brush became thicker, and nothing could be seen a few feet from the narrow

path which the sheep had beaten. Later the path swung around the edge of a cliff, and to one side they caught a glimpse of the valley and Grigo's smithy far below.

"Look!" cried Vanno excitedly. He pointed to a crag high above their heads and to the fore.

"It is a mountain sheep!" they all cried at once.

"What a giant!" exclaimed Vasso. "See what great horns he has!"

"I did not know that any mountain sheep were left in Guria," said the *natlia.* "I thought that they had all been killed."

"When I was a boy they were as thick as the pigs are now," said Grigo the smith. "But this fellow is the first that I have seen in years. They are fast dying out. They are very wild, and it is hard to get close enough to kill them. This old fellow must be very clever, though, to have lived to grow those beautiful horns."

"Give me your gun," said he to the *natlia.* "I will show you a trick."

"That sheep is too far away to reach with a bullet from my gun," said the *natlia* as he gave his rifle to the smith.

The smith, however, did not try to hit the distant sheep with a bullet. He took a cartridge and

pulled the bullet out with his strong white teeth and put it in the gun. Then he pointed the rifle into the air and fired. There was no "bang" with the bullet out—just a spurt of white smoke. It was enough, though; the big sheep disappeared so suddenly that it was hard to believe that he had really been standing there a moment before. He had seen the smoke with his keen wild eyes.

"You were right," laughed the *natlia,* taking his gun from Grigo. "He is a clever old sheep. You would walk your legs off before you could ever catch up with him."

When they had followed the path a little farther the mountain seemed to split in two, leaving a tiny valley between the two peaks. Into the mouth of this valley Grigo led the hunters.

"Here it is that we shall find our pigs," said he. "At the head of this valley is a spring that makes the ground soft and marshy. The pigs come here to wallow in the mud and eat young fern tops and mushrooms that grow in the moist shadow."

"They will hear us coming and escape through the other end," warned the *natlia.* "The wind is blowing from us toward them and they will surely smell us with their sharp noses long before we get close to them."

"Steep cliffs close the other end," said Grigo. "They cannot get out. There is only one way out —that is past us. If they smell us, as you say, and come out, they will only save us the trouble of going after them."

"I see now why your father is called the best pig hunter," said Gogi to Vanno. "Let us hang up the food and wine on the bushes over there. This will be a good place for our lunch."

"This is a good place," agreed Vanno. "There are plenty of twigs to make a fire and we can bring water from the spring after the hunt."

When the food and wine had been put out of reach of four-legged thieves Grigo again took command. "We who have spears," said he, "cannot use them very well in the bushes. We shall follow along the path. The *natlia* and neighbor Vasso can go through the bushes, one on the right and the other on the left of the path."

"You have picked the best place for yourself," laughed the *natlia.* "The pigs will all run down the path if they can." But he knew that Grigo was right about the bushes being in the way of the spears, and struck out to the left of the path.

Vasso took the right of the path and motioned to Gogi to keep behind him. Gogi grasped his

spear firmly and followed his father. Somewhere in the depths of the thicketed valley he heard a faint rustle. On this followed an angry squeal. It was the pigs. Every man took a firm grip on his gun or spear and moved toward the head of the valley. The ground grew softer and softer underfoot, the underbrush gradually thinned, and at last Gogi caught a glimpse of the open space around the spring.

Half a dozen pigs were wallowing in the slimy mud near the water, and as many more were nibbling at the tender roots near the foot of the cliff. The hunters no sooner saw the pigs than the pigs heard them. One old tusker leaped onto his feet and stood glaring with wicked little red eyes in their direction. Thin mud dribbled down from his lean body and thick mane of long bristles as he stamped his forefeet and snuffled and grunted, half in fright and half in anger. The other pigs hearkened to his warning and faced about toward the intruders.

Some twig that snapped beneath a careless foot or the rattle of a spear stave against a bush must have reached the ears of the pigs, for squealing and snorting in a frenzy of anger and terror they suddenly started for the sheep path. Like mad

they galloped straight for the half-concealed hunters. Gogi's heart was in his mouth. The boars who ran in front were very terrible with their great shaggy heads and long white tusks that curled up over their long evil snouts, and this was Gogi's first sight of a live wild pig at close quarters.

Gogi cannot be really blamed for being frightened, for even the older hunters felt a thrill. Gogi would have liked to grasp his father's arm, but he knew that he would need to be free in order to shoot. All this took but a moment, for Vasso raised his gun and fired at the foremost boar. At the same time there came the sound of the *natlia's* rifle. The pig at which Vasso shot fell in its tracks, and the others, with squeals louder than ever, passed right and left to disappear in the brush to the rear.

Vasso and Gogi stepped into the open to see their pig, and as they stooped over the body Vanno and his father the smith also came out of the bushes dragging a smaller one. Vanno limped as he walked, and Gogi saw that his clothes were covered with mud. The *natlia* followed, his rifle over his arm.

"It is Vasso's luck," said the smith, looking with admiration at the huge boar that had fallen

to Vasso's share. To the *natlia* he said. "You see, I did not pick such a good place for Vanno and myself, after all. I got no pigs for my trouble, and Vanno here got only this small one, and it dragged him, spear and all, through the mud and thorns."

"I have had my sport in finding them," said the *natlia*. "We have more meat, now, than we can carry. It is just as well that I missed my shot."

Back at the entrance of the valley Gogi and Vanno started a fire, and soon they were roasting chunks of fresh pork over the flames on green sticks. Vasso took down the wine skin and they all lunched before they began the journey home.

"It is a fine head that you have," said the *natlia* to Vasso. He meant, of course, the wild boar's head.

"You may have it and welcome," said Vasso.

"I shall stuff it and hang it in my room," said the *natlia*. "It will look very fine. See how long the bristles are!"

Gogi tied the boar's head in the cloth which had held the lunch and hung it on a pole which he and Vanno carried on their shoulders. The others each took a leg of pork and as much meat as they could carry, and after a rest they started for home.

The *natlia* was not to stuff the boar's head as he wished. When the hunters arrived at Vasso's house there was news awaiting them which made them forget all things such as stuffed boars' heads. The Russians were marching on Tiflis. It was war, after all. The *natlia* hastily prepared to return to Tiflis, but Gogi remained. The schools would be closed.

XXV

War, and the Stranger Again

ONCE again Gogi stood on the little station of Natonebi. But how changed the scene was now. Gone the lazy idlers who used to await each train; gone the quiet. In place of the idlers stood knots of soldiers in little round felt hats, rawhide moccasins, and short brown overcoats of heavy home-made felt. In place of the quiet there was bustle and confusion. Officers with silver-hilted curved swords strode hither and thither, shouting orders, collecting their men as they came from the trains which pulled into the station one after another.

The Georgian army was in retreat. The Russians were too many for their little army, brave as

it was. Tiflis had been lost to the enemy, who were even now robbing the houses and churches and shops. The president and his officers were somewhere on the road. Noah Jordani had waited until the last minute, but when he saw that there was no hope of withstanding the invaders he agreed to leave the capital and retreat with the army to the other side of the mountains. From the Mountains of Ozerget to the village of Natonebi and the sea the Georgians were getting ready to make a last stand against their foes.

Father Vasso was away in the hills with his little company of neighbors. Nina and sister Keto with baby Morro stayed bravely at home, and Gogi had come to Natonebi with the cart and the buffaloes to meet the *natlia,* who was also fleeing from Tiflis with his books and papers and all the money that he had been able to save in the short time he had.

Someone said, "The next train will be the last; they are going to blow up the big bridge over the river above so that the enemy cannot follow."

Gogi was worried. He found that the *natlias* would be cut off and killed by the Russians. The tracks of the iron road were filled with cars. As far as the eye could see there were trains. They

followed through as though they were one and not many; through and on to Batum, the sea, and ships which would have some of Georgia's treasure if the enemy broke down this last line at Natonebi.

Gogi saw a company of soldiers with green uniforms and round cloth caps with no visors. "Who are these soldiers?" he asked of a Gurian officer who stood near him.

"Those are Turks," said the officer. "We have called on our old enemies to help us at the last moment. Our ministers have promised them the city of Batum if they will only help us drive back the Russians."

Gogi looked again at the Turks. They were not bad-looking people, he decided. They had smiling open faces and appeared to be friendly. At any rate, they were better than the Russians. Gogi had heard tales of Russians and their soldiers.

The station master no longer came out to ring the station bell when a train arrived or left—he no longer knew what came in or went out. He sat hour after hour at his telegraph key receiving and sending messages. Gogi saw him through the window of his little office as he bent over his table of instruments. Everyone seemed busy to Gogi.

He alone had nothing to do—just waiting. That, he thought, was even harder than doing something. Suddenly there was stillness on the station platform.

A tremendous explosion had silenced every mouth and frozen every man in his place. Another followed, and then a third. The sounds echoed and reëchoed from the mountains like rolling of heavy thunder.

"The bridge!" someone shouted. "They have blown the bridge!"

The bridge was but a short distance away. Gogi's heart fell. If the *natlia* had not found a place on the one or two trains that crept along between the bridge and the station he would never reach Natonebi; Gogi shuddered at the thought.

The train which stood before the station whistled and pulled out. Another drew up into its place. This was the next to the last one. At the very end was a coach with the blinds closed fast. On the side of the coach was a great white star with a figure—the figure of White Georgi. It was the emblem of the Republic of Georgia. Fingers pointed to it and Gogi heard excited whispers.

"That is the car in which *Tchuenni* Noah sits,"

said a man. "He is very ill, they say, but refuses to leave the army. A brave man, Our Noah!"

"A brave man, indeed," he was answered. "Life to him! Life to our president! Life to Our Noah!" Other voices took up the cry, and the air rang with cheers for the courage of their cripple-president.

The president's car was put on a siding and the train left the station behind. Still the *natlia* had not arrived. The last train pulled in. Gogi rushed back and forth scanning the passengers. At last his watchful eye found the tall figure of the *natlia*. He looked tired, and there were lines about his eyes, but he was as calm as ever. His ready smile when he saw Gogi and the warm words with which he greeted him soon made Gogi forget all his early worries.

"The cart is waiting, *natlia*-heart," said Gogi, after he had embraced his godfather. "Shall we go?"

"I must send a telegram," said the *natlia*. "Let us see if the agent will take a message for me."

Gogi followed the *natlia* into the station. At the window of the station master's office the *natlia* showed a pass to the guard and they were admitted to the telegraph office where the tired

agent sat. But before the *natlia* was able to speak to the busy man there was a sharp command of "Attention!" and a party of officers and civilians crowded into the office.

One of the officers stepped to the front and said to the agent, "Hold the wire for His Honor, the President!"

The agent leaped to his feet and stood at attention. Gogi looked toward the newcomers. From their midst stepped the president. It was the same tired old man who had sat with Gogi in the garden behind the palace at Tiflis. The same old man, but perhaps a little older and far more tired. He limped painfully to the agent's table and dropped wearily into the vacant chair.

"Get me, please, the governor of Batum," he asked the agent.

The agent took up the telephone and called the station of Batum. In another moment the president was talking with the governor. His voice was so low that Gogi could not hear what was said, but when he hung the receiver on the hook and turned about to the waiting officers the president's face was more hopeless and sadder than ever.

"We have no hope," said he sorrowfully.

"Other nations have battleships in the sea at Batum, but they will not help us to fight. They will only help us to run away. The Russians are coming across the mountains and through the Pass of Artvin. If all haste is not made we shall be cut off from Batum. I have told the governor at Batum to surrender without further fighting. It would be foolish to fight when we have no hope of winning. Enough of our brave Karthli have been killed as it is."

No one answered the president. There was nothing to say. He had merely spoken aloud what they had all felt in their hearts for the last two days. Georgia had again fallen to foreign invaders. Georgians were about to become slaves again. The agent had returned to his instruments, but they no longer clicked. He lifted the receiver and tried to get a connection on the telephone. It was useless. The telephone was dead. The agent turned to the group with the president.

"My instruments are dead," said he. "I cannot get even the next station. Some spy has cut our lines."

An officer turned to the president. "This means that we dare not go to Batum, *Batuna* President," said he. "We must cut across the hills on horses

and trust to finding a boat on the seashore which we can take and reach the ship by water. It will be harder travel, *Batuna* President; it is best that you rest for a while before we start."

There was a cot in the station agent's room, for he had slept at his instrument for the last few days, and on this the president was begged to lie down for an hour's rest. When the president had been made as comfortable as possible by the same officer, who seemed to be a great person, the remainder filed out of the room so that he might have greater quiet. As Gogi passed through the door the officer saw him for the first time, and spoke to him.

"You are from Natonebi?" he asked. "You know this village?"

"Yes, *Batuna*,officer," answered Gogi.

"Khargi!" said the officer. "That is well. Go then and fetch a *koki* of water so that the *Batuna* President may wash and drink before he sleeps for a while."

"I hear you," said Gogi, and made ready to obey the order.

"I shall wait for you by the cart," cried the *natlia*. "I will load my baggage and eat some lunch."

"Khargi!" shouted Gogi over his shoulder as he ran away on his errand.

When Gogi returned with the water in an earthen *koki* he was admitted to the little room by the same officer, who stood at the closed door. Gogi approached the figure on the rough cot.

"If you please, *Batuna* President," said he to the old man on the cot. "Water I have brought you that you may wash and drink before you sleep."

Gogi poured the water over the outstretched hands of the president, and taking a glass from the table, filled it that he might drink.

"Life to you and health," said Gogi, as the president drank the glass of water which he offered.

"To you life and thanks," replied the president, and as he handed the glass back to Gogi he raised his eyes and smiled at him. In that one glance he recognized the boy.

"Abba!" he exclaimed with surprise. "It is my little Gurian neighbor who sat with me in the castle gardens!"

"The same, *Batuna* President," replied Gogi, flushed with happiness and pride that the great man had remembered him.

"See!" said the president, who had not forgotten their talk. "The wall was not made so strong by me after all. I have been a poor Surabo. And in a few hours, perhaps, I shall be as dead as Surabo has been these hundreds of years."

Gogi could only shake his head; he did not know what to say.

"One must be young to be a hero like Surabo. I am too old. You young people must become the Surabos who will bring strength to the tribes of the Karthli: you who are fighting."

"I am not fighting," Gogi managed to murmur. "They say that I am too young to fight. That is what they told Surabo. He was younger even than I am."

"Yes," said the president, "you are too young."

"No man is too young to die for his country," replied Gogi with a smile. "That is what Surabo said, and I, too, say the same."

At first Gogi thought that he had not been heard. The old man sat on the edge of his cot with closed eyes. Gogi stood and waited. When the old man opened his eyes again there was a smile in them. He motioned to Gogi to come closer.

"You are right," said he, "as Surabo was right.

You can serve your country equally as well. If you fail it is not your life that will be lost, but something that should be dearer to any Karthli than his life. I am going to give into your keeping the honor of all the nation of the Karthli."

Here the president paused for a moment and pulled from beneath the cot a small leather bag. Opening this, he took out a square box of polished wood fitted with hinges of silver. This he also opened with a little key which was in the lock and offered it so that Gogi might see what it held.

The box was lined with red velvet and on its bottom lay a polished, pear-shaped object. This the president lifted from the velvet and held it in the light of the window. To the small end of the pear was affixed a round disk. The surface of the disk had been carved with letters and an image. Gogi looked closer. The letters were the letters of the "soldier's writing" of the Karthli and the image was that of White Georgi, the patron saint of the Caucasus and all Georgia.

"This," said the president solemnly, "is the great seal of our country which is placed upon all our papers. If it should fall into evil hands, such as the hands of these invaders, it would cause great harm. Evil people might write wrongful

things on paper, and when they sealed them with this image of White St. Georgi no one would be able to know that it had not been done by me or some other of our true Karthli."

He paused again and returned the seal to the box from which he had taken it. He reached into the leather bag again and pulled out a red bundle. When he had unfolded this bundle Gogi saw that it was the flag of the Karthli—a red flag with a square of black and white in the corner. The president wrapped the box in the flag and continued:

"We are cut off from the ships at Batum. The enemy are before and behind. My officers tell me that we must cut across the hills to the sea and seek a moat to save our lives. It will be a very hard trip. The enemy may overtake us, or I may fall by the road, for I am a very old man. For this reason I am about to give our great seal of the Karthli into your hands. You are young and you wish to serve your country. Take it and hide it away in the hills of our beautiful Guria so that it can never fall into evil hands. Some day I may come for it. If I do not come and the time should arise you will know what is to be done. Your heart will tell you what is best for the tribes

of Karthli and whom you may trust. Guard it well. It is the honor of the Karthli, and Guria, and you, and me. . . . A good road to you and long life; farewell, son of Guria."

Gogi had heard all that was said as in a dream. But the weight of the flag-wrapped box in his hands told him that it was no dream. He held the seal of White St. Georgi and the Karthli. He thrust the treasure beneath his blouse and opened the door.

"A good road, *Batuna* President," said he. "Long life to you. I shall wait for you and the day in the hills of Guria. Farewell."

"You have worried the *Batuna* with your prattle," said the officer as he closed the door behind Gogi. "Is he resting well?"

"He was smiling," said Gogi. "I think that he will rest well now."

At the cart the *natlia* stood. Gogi greeted him and they both climbed into its middle.

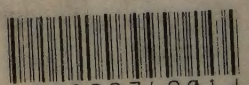
"Ho, Rustam! Ho, Nazira!" shouted Gogi to the sleepy buffaloes. The heavy wooden cart creaked away from the station platform, now almost deserted, and the little iron-road village of Natonebi was soon left far behind.

Before them rose the lofty peaks of the Gurian

hills, but as yet they were in the low places. Gogi would not feel quite safe until he saw the mountains about him. Gurians used to sing in the low places to drive away the goblins that they thought lived there. Gogi did not believe in goblins, but when he felt the hard corners of the little wooden box beneath the folds of his rough homespun blouse he felt an urge to sing. He sang:

"Hooooo-la, ho-la,
Hooooo-la-ho. . . ."

The mountains ahead showed warm and green in the last rays of the setting sun and from their woody sides came an answering echo like a homely welcome to their midst:

"Ho-la-hooooooo. . . ."

CHEVALIER JULIER C
NOAHS GRANDCHILDREN
1929 DOUBLEDAY DORAN